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OIL AND WINE

WITHDRAWN

BY

GEORGE TYRRELL

AUTHOR OF

"Hard Sayings," etc.

"And drawing nigh he bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine"

LUKE X 34

Reissue with a new Preface

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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THIS book was first published by Mr. Sydney Mayle, of Hampstead, in April, 1906, and the publication transferred to Messrs. Longmans, Green, and Co., and reissued by them, with a new Preface, in February, 1907.

PREFACE TO THE NEW ISSUE OF "OIL AND WINE."

THIS volume was on the point of publication a few years ago, when it was withdrawn for reasons to which at the time I was bound to defer. Into those reasons it is not my purpose to enter here. Reverence for the dead; respect for a distinguished and estimable personality forbid me to rake up the embers of an extinct and perfectly private controversy, and perhaps to raise a satirical smile on the lips of those to whom no excellency of character can ever compensate for what seems, to their very superior judgment, a limitation of outlook. Hence I have declined the suggestion of printing in an Appendix the three theological critiques on the strength of which the publication had to be abandoned, though to have done so would have been to provide a presumable antidote to the poison with which my pages were said to be replete, and to deprive the volume of all suspicion of being a dangerous book. It would have been in some sense the equivalent of an official

authorization. But an authorization of that kind is precisely what I most earnestly wish to avoid. I wish to label the book *Dangerous* in the largest type possible, and, as far as my will goes, to place it on the Index of prohibited works. And this, needless to say, not out of any lack of due respect for such authorizations, but because they so often induce simple and uncritical people, for whom I have never written, to approach my writings on their knees, in that spirit of blind trust and passive receptivity in which they are accustomed to approach the teachings of the Church herself. In theory, episcopal approbation in no way justifies this supine attitude, this wholesale deglutition; but in practice it is far otherwise. The fact that such official approvals are liable to revision and have of late been frequently revised by a higher tribunal is one that seems to make no sufficient impression on the popular mind or to diminish its exaggerated confidence in the *Imprimatur*. From first to last, I have written, not from on high, as a teacher, but as an inquirer on the same platform as my readers. There is nothing I desiderate less in them than that reverent docility of mind which considers before all things the official and ecclesiastical status of the writer, the credentials of respectability with which his book is fortified; which looks to the external authority rather than to the intrinsic value of what he writes. Everything that tends

to diminish the writer's external prestige, to destroy such docility, to evoke a critical and cautious disposition, to make the mind keenly alert and distrustful, will help to the fulfilment of the sole end to which these and similar pages are directed. That end is not to dogmatize, nor to ventilate new opinions, nor to win adherents for them, nor to form a school, nor to prescribe rules of conduct; but simply to suggest, to provoke reflection, to aid it when provoked, to furnish a hodge-podge of materials, good, bad, and indifferent, from which real and living minds can freely select such as are fit to be built into their own fabric by their own strenuous labour. There is no spiritual progress without jolt and jar and many a rude awakening. Nowhere have smooth tracks been laid down for the benefit of those who would slumber and sleep on their route Heavenwards. Yet if it is part of the divine idea of education never to weaken the soul by any unnecessary assistance, it also belongs to the same wise charity to assist it up to the measure of its necessity; to temper the roughness of the road to the weakness or weariness of the wayfarer. One and the same method of ministry is not suited for all. The child cannot keep stride with the man. It were as unfair to prescribe that all should be abreast of the swiftest as that all should hang back with the slowest. In both cases there is offence and scandal; there, of the weak; here, of the

strong. Previous to its first publication last year by Mr. Sydney Mayle, of Hampstead, this volume had been circulated more or less privately among the latter, and it is hardly too much to say that whatever difficulties it may have alleviated, it has not created even one; and that however many souls it may have stimulated, I know of none that it has discouraged or scandalized—a result largely due to the fact that the conditions under which it was circulated, were such as to secure a critical and distrustful reading. This is in no wise to question the more educated wisdom of those whose good sense judged it worthy of episcopal approval, in the first instance. It is only to assert that such official approbation, as commonly misinterpreted, might have made the book a snare to the passively docile. That, indeed, were not reason enough for withholding approval; for the only books that can do no harm are those that can do no good. Unwary and unstable souls have been warped and perverted by the *Imitation*, by Rodriguez, by S. John of the Cross, by the *Spiritual Exercises;* above all, by the written Word of God. Yet, except the last, none of these books has ever been forbidden to the general reader.

If when this volume first left my hands, carefully revised in accordance with official criticism, I was fully aware that it must abound in ignorances, errors, and inconsistencies which no censorial vigilance could possibly eliminate from the work of

mortal man, far more am I now explicitly conscious of faults I would fain amend were it practicable to re-write it from beginning to end. For example, what I have in various parts said about the stability of faith implies a "voluntarism" as crude as is the "intellectualism" against which it revolts. The relation of mutual dependence between faith and orthodoxy, revelation and theology, is very imperfectly grasped and expressed. In avoiding the false "transcendence" of Deism I may have drifted too near the Charybdis of Pantheism in search of the middle course of Panentheism; in urging the unity, I may have endangered the distinctness of souls. Let it suffice, however, to have thus sounded my fog-bell once and for all. I am too conscious of my blindness to wish to be a leader of the blind.

But it may be objected that for all alike, for the wise as for the simple, any sort of search and inquiry into religious truth is inconsistent with that whole-hearted acceptance of traditional forms, that docile, unquestioning, uncurious receptivity which should characterize the loyal Catholic.

I cannot but think that the principle underlying this objection is one that would condemn Catholic doctrine to absolute sterility; that would, with fatal consequences, have bound it fast in the swaddling-clothes of its earliest infancy; that would justify the worst that has ever been said of its obstructive and soul-destroying character.

We are Catholics because we know that the organ in which the embodied Spirit of Truth and Righteousness gradually reveals itself and works out its fuller manifestation is not the individual but the community; because we subject the limited infallibility of our own mental processes, to that of a social experience and reflection—to an infallibility which is higher according to the width, the depth, the antiquity of that stream of collective experience. Yet we know too that if the individual spirit is wakened, stimulated, and formed by the general mind, it also contributes to its formation. Growth requires a principle of variation and suggestion subject to a principle of criticism, selection, and assimilation.

And by the general we do not mean the average mind, the popular impression; but rather that one truth which fills and overflows both the deepest ocean valleys and the noisiest shallows of the beach; which all are striving to compass according to their several capacities. We are, then, each of us joint-labourers with all Catholics, present, past, and future, in the work of building up the great fabric of religious truth wherein our souls and theirs who shall come after us are to be housed. The city that our fathers began to build for us we have to continue for our children. Their needs will differ as widely from ours, as ours from those of the distant past. None of us may build wildly according to his private

freak and fancy, but solely in the best attainable light as to what has already been done and what has yet to be done by the historical Church. Unity of spirit, of idea or plan, must pervade the work from beginning to end: and to apprehend this idea ever more adequately through the study of the past, in the light of the present and of the immediate future, is a labour in which we are all in some degree co-operant. To gather together the fruits of individual reflection and experience; to sort and compare them; to subject them to the sovereign criticism of that Spirit of Truth which is, not external to, but embodied in the whole Church, which utters its slow verdict, not in words but in practical results, by the survival of what is life-giving; by the decay and obsolescence of what is unreal—that is the function of the Church's official teachers.

The stimulation of religious experience and reflection is therefore an essential condition of the Church's vitality and growth, without which the walls of the ecclesiastical city will prove all too narrow for the thronging generations of the future.

Nor is it hard for sane common sense to see the difference between mere freakishness and wanton innovation, and the sober endeavour to interpret and give clearer expression to the general mind. To depart from established conventions for merely selfish motives is licence and not liberty. To do for

the negative reason that we do not see their utility, that we cannot compass the wide and persistent experience of which they are the fruit, is intellectual conceit and self-sufficiency. To do so because we positively see, still more because many others are independently beginning to see, that they have become hurtful to the sovereign law of the Common Good, is not disobedience, but that most courageous and costing obedience to which all social reform and progress is due. And the same holds good of conventional formulations of the Collective Mind, which through altered modes of thought and speech, have lost their first usefulness and grown to be misleading. It is not "private judgment" if, when it has irresistibly declared itself, we prefer the sovereign and most universal to any subordinate rule or ruler.

Turning then from my co-religionists of both sorts—those for whom I do, and those for whom I do not write; the critically alert and the reverentially receptive—I owe a kind of apology to those outsiders who, over-estimating the rational significance of ecclesiastical approbations, have taken as representative of official Catholicism writings which, at the most, have been tolerated. In point of fact these writings have been disliked and distrusted the nearer they have come to that centre of ecclesiastical government where the interests of the passive many are, not unnaturally, of more account than those of

the active-minded minority. This I have always conscientiously explained to individual seekers who have been drawn towards the Church in the belief that my utterances, because sealed with an *Imprimatur*, were those of the hierarchy itself. To disillusion them was a duty I owed both to them and to those officials in whose name alone I had any right to receive them. Either they had recourse to others, or else went away sad, unwilling to give up the great possession of their liberty.

Nothing was more remote from my wishes and intentions than to act or to be used as a decoy in the interests of proselytism, and I would have no dealings with those who wanted to enter the Church by some side postern instead of by the front door. Of this, scores could witness; some still outside, others since admitted by confessors more eager than I to "snatch a brand from the burning" at any price.

If then I exposed and defended a wider and kindlier interpretation of Catholicism, it was not that I thought such a spirit was approved, or was more than barely tolerated by the school at present in the ascendency at headquarters; but that I thought it might at least be just tolerated. Yet, tolerated or not, I believed and do still believe it to be the spirit which dwells deep down in the nethermost heart of the Catholic community, and which is bound one day to assert itself triumphantly

over every sort of cruelty and moral violence and intolerance. In the interests of order one may be bound to defer externally to those who believe otherwise, yet their well-meant presentment of the Church's features can never seem to me more than a libellous caricature. Did I agree with them, every reason for external deference to them would be gone.

In the process of "restoring all things in Christ," we must sooner or later work back to the overlaid elements of His Gospel. His spirit is not so concentrated and confined in the institutional Church as not to be also diffused throughout Christendom and throughout humanity, where faith may often be found of a kind unknown in Israel. The seed carried over the wall of a garden may sometimes fructify more abundantly beyond, and in due time come to refertilize the exhausted soil of its origin. The Church may at times weaken but she cannot wholly destroy her inevitable solidarity with the age. She must eventually be leavened and softened by those "kindlier manners and gentler laws," that have been developed in the civilization which she herself once nurtured with the milk of the Gospel.

One word as to the title of this volume. It alludes not to the oil of consolation and the wine of spiritual stimulus, but to the unauthorized, unofficial, irregular character of these ministrations of the Word. Having been both myself I have

more than once spoken up for the priest and the levite, who work under limitations and embarrassments of which the irresponsible layman has little conception. If they are to exercise the liberty of the Samaritan and the outcast, they must see that their action is clearly understood as personal, and as in no wise compromising the corporation of which they are members. Sacred as are the offices of divine charity, there are cases when *communicatio in sacris* cannot be tolerated without offence to others, nor may the responsible shepherd of Israel lightly suffer it to be said of him: "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil." Yet, however indelible the priestly "character," it is not so deeply imprinted as to obliterate completely the stamp of humanity, nor is the lay-spirit ever wholly exorcised by the imposition of episcopal hands. And there are possible conditions under which even the priest or the levite may, without scandal, draw near unofficially to the half-murdered wayfarer, and bind up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine.

G. TYRRELL.

January 25, 1907.

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INTRODUCTION.

And there shall be One Fold and One Shepherd.—John x. 16.

The charge of sentimentalism has been too lightly brought against those who assert that religion is something prior to, and separable from, any of its forms or formulations. If the assertion mean that, consequently, religion may subsist without any form whatever; or that there is no gradation of lower or higher among the various attempts to interpret the religious instinct of man's heart; or that God Himself has not come to our aid in the matter and disclosed us to ourselves through Christ, it cannot be defended by any Christian. Religion is prior to its form with a merely logical priority; it did not exist before them, and can never exist without them, just as the moral instinct is inseparable from some one or other definite code of morality, were it even the rudest. We do not begin with the abstract notions of right and wrong, and then use them to determine particulars; but conversely, from a comparison of definite actions, bidden or forbidden by conscience, we rise slowly to these abstractions, and to a more distinct and explicit idea of conscience. So too

"religion in general" is an abstraction derived from a comparison of concrete religions with their various forms; and can no more be realized in fact, than any other abstraction.

Still, although we are bound in conscience to strive, each of us, after the highest and worthiest expression of things divine that it may be possible for us to compass; although we may not "sink our differences," or undervalue any little glimmer of light that enables us to see less dimly through the dark glass of symbols and similitudes into the inner sense of eternal riddles; yet it is now, more than ever, of the utmost importance for us to remember that, even the divinest adaptation of infinite truth to the finite mind is but a breaking up of that pure unbroken Light which enlightens every man who comes into the world; which beats equally, so to say, upon the eyes of all, but enters unequally, and elicits unequal response. And as the sunlight is said to fashion, or at least to condition the fashioning of, the bodily vision into an ever close responsiveness to its own appeal,—and that, not capriciously, but according to a steady law o progress; so the eternal Reality, apart from disturbing conditions and wilful resistance, by its continua pressure on all sides, by the ceaseless beating of its waves, forces the heart and mind of man into an ever closer correspondence and sympathy with itself. Through whatever medium it be viewed, whether dense and distorting, or less dense and less distorting; whether it be all but obliterated in the degrading religions of savagery, or focussed

to a blinding intensity in the highest form of Christianity, that Reality which is seen, is one and the same—always immeasurably greater and other than those minds whose very life and blessedness consists in straining everlastingly to compass the incomprehensible. Here then, without indifferentism or any disloyalty to the claims of truth, is a ground of agreement between all religions as such. All alike originate from the same centre of attraction drawing man back to his Source—back to his home in the invisible; out of time, out of space,—*ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem.* And in this, without attempting futile definitions, we seem to find the most general characteristic by which religion is distinguished from morality and other allied manifestations of rational life—it is the recognition of man's practical relation to superior beings of the invisible order, one or many, good or evil.

The universality of this attraction to the spiritual centre—however it be interpreted, or even if it be dismissed as illusory,—is a fact; and is besides, a fact more deeply rooted in our nature than any analysis or explanation of the fact can be; nor can our differences as to the latter ever be so important as our agreement as to the former. Doctrines are but explanations of the source and end of the attraction, and of the means by which that end is to be realized. We explain the unknown in terms of the known; the invisible in the language of the visible; and, in this case, the infinitely greater in terms of the infinitely less. Hence every

explanation of the other world is both analogical and inadequate; it is a similitude, not an equation; and whatever excellence it predicates is less excellent than the reality. The truth of such doctrines is therefore not the truth of an equation, but of an analogy—true similarity, not true sameness. One similitude may be fuller than another, and yet that other may be true. A nation may be compared truly to a mechanism, to a tree, to an animal, to a hive of bees, with different degrees of truth. Christ calls the Church a kingdom, a net, a mustard-seed, a wedding-feast. But the same thing cannot be literally a machine and a tree—a kingdom, and a net. It is only when doctrines and systems are taken as equations that they necessarily contradict one another by being different. But in all this there is no justification of indifferentism about doctrines, as though any little degree of greater adequacy and truthfulness were negligeable; but only a plea for charity and intelligence, and a warning against missing any glimmer of light that may be derived from systems other than our own.

As in the development of conscience, we need not, and do not, doubt the truth and reality of our advance upon lower stages from which we have emerged, although we can well believe that in a fuller day our present light may seem darkness; so in regard to faith (taken widely for our beliefs and hopes concerning the unseen), we need have no scepticism as to the greater fulness and truth of one doctrine and system as compared with another. The Law is not untrue because the Gospel

transcends it; nor is our present faith untrue, because it will be swallowed up in vision. If indeed we cannot, in virtue of an appeal, not to our mind alone, but to our whole spiritual nature, discern between greater and less; higher and lower; richer and poorer; if we cannot know when we are growing and expanding, or when we are cramped and contracted; if we cannot bring truth to the test of life; then no efforts of mere reasoning or criticism will save us from agnostic despair. As correctives they have their due place in regard to religious beliefs; as creative principles they are impotent. "No man having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith: The old is better;" it is in the last resort a matter of taste and experiment; he cannot prove his preference, but he does not doubt it. And so it is with those "who have tasted of the Heavenly Gift; and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come."

From the principles here put forward it follows that, he who keeps the commandment shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God; that doctrine depends upon religion as much as, if not more, than religion upon doctrine; since it is the effort of religion to find utterance and embodiment. For as the strong creative thought of genius selects spontaneously the aptest language at its disposal, so a deeply religious spirit will not fail to respond to that doctrine or system which is more consonant with its needs and exigencies.

Hence though some kind of doctrinal system is

inseparable from religion, yet it is but as the containing bark which ever breaks and mends, and readjusts itself to the growth of the trunk which it encases. Our commonest danger is that of inverting the order of dependence; of making religion the outgrowth; with the result that in seasons of readjustment or obscurity, when we are on our way to greater gain, we expose ourselves to utter loss, mistaking the pains of growth for the pangs of death. In this, we do not speak of the necessarily rigid formulæ of public and external religion, which however have their analogous law of modification, but of each one's subjective and individual mode of apprehending religious truth, which, unless he be dead to all vital interest in the matter, must ever grow with the growth of his mind and strengthen with its strength.

Yet the chief condition of this growth is, to have no anxiety save as to the "one thing needful" —as to the practical realization of our relationship with God so far as we understand it. Doctrine registers, but does not stay, the growth of this communion. Like the rising stem of the palm-tree, it ever lifts its crown of spreading foliage to a higher plane of more luxuriant and vigorous life, and receives a return in the increment of its own substance. We feel a truth before we formulate it; and when formulated, it helps us to feel our way to a further truth; but our life is in the feeling, not in the formula; in the foliage, not in the stem.

If these things were better understood we should seek remedy for the religious divisions in this

country, neither by a violent and hopeless attempt at a superficial adjustment of doctrinal differences by means of controversy; nor by an equally violent or short-sighted denial of the significance of these differences; but by digging down to the very root from which all religions spring, and whose morbid condition is the source of the evil in question. Instead of arguing over the form and function of this dry bone or the other, we should put them all together joint to joint and clothe them with flesh and nerve and muscle, and breathe into them the breath of life. For life is the test of religious truth; the true words are "the words of eternal life"—the life, not merely of intellectual truth, not merely of ethical purity of conduct, interior and exterior, but of our felt and experienced relationship to the incomprehensible realities of the world to come;—the life, in other words, of faith and hope and divine love.

Marvellous as is the range of doctrinal variety amongst us, from the simplest and most amorphous kind of theism or deism, up to the complexly organized system of Catholic Christianity, we are many of us profoundly united in our primary religious impulses, in our ultimate religious aspirations. This very earnestness as to the common end in view, will make indifferentism as to the means impossible; but it should also change the whole spirit and temper and method of our endeavour to draw others to what we ourselves believe to be the better and straighter way. And what makes this striving towards union so incumbent on all who

have any say in the matter; what makes indifferentism so morally inexcusable, is not the distress of cultivated minds seeking the luxury of a philosophical synthesis; but the condition of the multitudes harassed and scattered as sheep having no shepherd. The dissensions of the independent leaders of thought and belief may be of little hurt to themselves; for them, conceivably, religion may be separable from *a* religion: they may seem to breathe a purer air in the heights of speculation than do the closely-packed multitudes on the plain below; to

> Sit like God holding no form of creed
> But contemplating all.

Even were all this allowed—and surely it is inadmissible—yet what of "the man in the street"? What of the crowd to whom religion must be, always has been, *a* religion; whose stability of belief and practice must depend, always has depended, on the unanimity of those around them, and eventually on the unanimity of those above them, who create and shape the general mind? Before improved means of intercourse had fused peoples together as they are now fused, differences of creed were a less all-present influence for evil than they have become in consequence. But now even the least educated can point to the world-wide dissensions of the thoughtful and learned in justification of his indifferentism, as in former times he would have appealed to their unanimity in justification of his belief.

It is this consideration that causes the eyes of some who stand aloof, bewildered with the clash of creeds, to turn wistfully towards the Catholic ideal of an international or universal religion, and to lament over what seems to them the perversion and stultification of a system which once promised such great things for the good of humanity. Whether, for them, Catholicism mean the divided East and West, or the Churches dependent upon Rome, in either case they regard it—not as a religion that lives in the present age, but as one that survives from a former—a noble attempt that has failed ignominiously. And yet the hopelessness of finding a substitute drives them back, time after time, to reconsider the Church's claims. That in spite of seeming petrifaction, Catholicism has its living and life-giving message for the soul; that, whatever lethargy now seems to weigh upon its weary limbs, it can yet rise to even more vigorous activity than it has hitherto known, is the faint hope of many a soul perplexed with the problems of the present day.

That such faint hope may be confirmed is avowedly an indirect motive of the present effort —an effort in no sense apologetic or controversial; but, so to say, medicinal and experimental. We have not to manipulate the truth, but simply to clear the eye of the soul and let it see what it will. Without this, all assent is mere formalism; with this, all error is but superficial. Approaching our differences in this spirit we shall at least tend towards, if we do not arrive at, the same centre.

from quarters how opposite soever. But though the interests of those outside the visible communion of the Church have determined much that has been said and much that has been omitted in these desultory pages—gleaned from the notes of occasional sermons and instructions—it is not directly to them but to those of the household of the faith that these reflections are offered as matter for meditation or private reading, in order to deepen their understanding of just those elements of Catholic Christianity which are still to a great extent retained, appreciated, loved, and practised by so many of their fellow-countrymen as yet separated from the centre of unity. It is only in virtue of what we still hold in common that we can get to understand one another, and to enter into that sympathy of spirit which alone can create the wish and prepare the way for an agreement in thought and profession.

Hence in order to forestall some of the misunderstandings to which such an undertaking as this is inevitably exposed, it should be noted that it is not the writer's aim to put forth the fulness of Catholic belief and devotion in all detail, but rather, deliberately and of set purpose, to prescind from those points which, without being exactly essential, are so distinctively Catholic as to awake no echo of sympathy in those outside the visible communion of the Church: and to build so far as possible upon common ground. For owing to the continual insistence of Catholics themselves on these very points of difference in the face of aggressive

negation, an impression has been inevitably created in the minds of outsiders that their religion consists entirely and exclusively in these things, and that they have no appreciation or esteem of those fundamental aspects of Christianity which they do not bring into controversy just because they are taken for granted as common to all. The practice of defining things briefly by their differences leads to the fallacy of forgetting their other constituents. Hence a Catholic is popularly considered as one who lives by authority, seeks salvation in externals, worships the Virgin and the Saints, and so forth; and it is a matter of surprise if he is found to be in living sympathy with what is best in all religions and in all grades of Christian profession. Nothing more effectually deters many devout Christians from considering the claims of the Church than the notion that in submitting to her they would have to sacrifice much of that internal spiritual vitality which their conscience tells them is God's work in their souls, and whose reality they could not deny without shaking the basis of the possibility of any certitude in religious matters. It is then most necessary they should see that all they cling to is saved, if it is also transcended and supplemented, in Catholicism; and that, to this end, Catholics themselves should be reminded of the danger, even in their own practice, of so emphasizing what is peculiar to themselves, as to underrate what is common to all.

Hence to those who read without respect to the writer's guiding motive it may be a matter of

unmerited complaint on the one hand, or of unmerited commendation on the other, that he suppresses all insistence on the pre-eminence and exclusiveness of Catholic Christianity, as alien to his scope. There are many labourers in that field.

A somewhat similar exception may be taken to the stress laid upon the almost infinite inadequacy of any human forms of expression—borrowed, as they necessarily are, from those physical phenomena which are our only possible medium of intercourse—to compass the realities of the spiritual and supernatural world. Not that so obvious a point of theological teaching can be questioned for a moment; but that from this point of view, the difference between the highest and the lowest forms of religion seems to be dwarfed to insignificance. The same, however, might be said of our intellectual or ethical standards as measured with the infinity of the Divine wisdom and sanctity. But with such a measure we have no business. What is of infinitesimal value from an infinite point of view, may be of almost infinite value from a finite point of view. For us, the difference between the morals and science of savagery and our own is of immeasurable consequence; and similarly that between the lower and the higher forms of religion. Compared with the bulk of the universe, those of a man and a mite are practically equal; but compared with one another, the difference is all-important. To draw any conclusion in favour of religious indifferentism from so obvious a reflection, would be to trespass against the elemen-

tary principles of sound reasoning and to ignore explicit statements to the contrary which abound in these pages.

It is a point of loyalty to the teaching-authority of the Church to dig a deep trench between what is imposed and what is permitted in the matter of belief, and to be jealous of giving idolatrously to the latter the honour that is due to the former alone. It were no less an unwarranted usurpation to bind what the Church has loosed, or left loose, than to loose what she has bound. Those Catholics who are properly instructed in the elements of their religion—and those who are not, had better lay this book down—will easily discern in these pages, what is of faith and received doctrine from what lies outside that region and is permitted to the liberty of individual opinion. In this outlying territory the writer has used freely the latitude which authority freely accords: and claims no more attention than is due to the inherent worth of what is said—be it more or less. There is nothing here that Catholics may not believe and say, though there is a great deal which they need not, and as a fact, do not universally believe or say.

Finally, it must be admitted that, from the nature of the subjects handled, as well as from defective handling, there are many things hard to be understood which the unstable and unwary may wrest to their own hurt, and which would make one hesitate as to the wisdom of publishing at all, were it not that the needs of the wary and stable seem equally worthy of consideration. No hurt need be

feared if it be remembered that what startles us as being new in sound or substance does not necessarily scandalize us; it may be as well a sudden transition from darkness to light as from light to darkness. In either case there is surprise; but loss, only in the latter. The Gospel was naturally a surprise to the Jews, but it ought not to have been a scandal. Yet it is evident that in some minds the terms are synonymous, and that whatever is new, relatively to their own knowledge, is regarded as dangerous, just as to the savage every stranger is therefore an enemy.

Also it should be remembered that passages torn away from their context and analyzed as though they were dogmatic definitions or theological theses, are bound to yield a different sense from that which they bear, taken in their concrete relationship to the whole of which they are part. So treated, it is notorious that the Sacred Scriptures themselves have been adduced in support of every heresy the Church has known; much less then can the present writer pretend to be armed invulnerably against the venomed shafts of so ungenerous and uncritical a method of onslaught.

G. TYRRELL.

London, Easter, 1900.

I.

THE INEVITABLE QUESTION.

Remember, O man, that thou art dust and that unto dust thou shalt return.

Though not a truth of religion, there is no natural truth more closely allied to the religious problem that that of man's mortality. It is one in which we are all agreed—believers, doubters, unbelievers —and, more than any other, it forces on us the question: Is death the end?

Yet though so notionally evident to the mind, so universally confessed with the lips, there is no truth more practically forgotten, less generally realized than this; none whose realization works a deeper change in our life, for good or for ill, according to the view we take of death. For, a fact, however real in itself, however notionally true for our mind, is not real *for us* until we give it substance by the accommodation to it of our action and life; in a word, by treating it practically as a reality, and as an element of our world and environment. This is precisely what we mean by "conviction." It is possible, and common, to go through life without once realizing the fact of death till it grips us by the throat. Even those of us into whom the reality of death has entered (as a poisonous sting or as a

salutary tonic—as a double-edged sword piercing to the joints and marrow and discerning the thoughts of the heart), float so much upon the surface and in the middle of things, that our different views as to what lies in the hidden depths, or beyond the bounding shores, does not, save in rare moments of reflection, tell seriously upon our happiness one way or the other; so that in the long intervals there is little to distinguish the man of faith from the man of doubt or unbelief. Besides the large fraction of our time which is passed in bodily sleep, our deepest self, our full freedom and perfect reason, are wrapt in slumber, more or less profound, during most of those waking hours in which our surface life and movement, interior and exterior, is passively determined by instinct, habit, routine, inclination, mimicry, mechanical obedience, and similar principles, without which the occasional exercise of our truest selfhood would be impossible and wholly insufficient for the increasing adaptation of our life to its infinitely complex surroundings. For the most part, we must commit ourselves to this natural machinery; but we are not fully alive or awake, save in those moments in which we withdraw ourselves from it, and oppose ourselves to it, and thereby mark ourselves off as distinct and independent agents and personalities. By resisting ourselves we assert ourselves; dying we live. But there is a spiritual insomnia as morbid as the cerebral malady—a tension of life at its highest pitch that cannot long be sustained without disaster. We are none of us strong enough to live without

some spiritual sleep and relaxation; while many are so weak that nearly their whole life is spent in slumber. There are multitudes who live a purely passive phenomenal life; from hand to mouth as it were—from incident to incident, concerned only with the immediate past and future; feeling no need of any other unity in their life than that of a drop-by-drop trickle of honey. They are as swarming gnats; as the "flies of later spring" rejoicing in to-day's sunshine; neither questioning, nor affirming, nor denying; but simply heedless of the coming night with its chill contempt of their mazy dances, their battlings and their senseless buzzings.

Preachers and moralists are perhaps too quick to ascribe all this to the inborn naughtiness of man's heart. It is but the abuse, or over-use, of wise Nature's narcotic, who knows that the naked bones of truth need to be shrouded in the garments of illusion, if they are to be serviceable to man; that mortal eyes cannot see God and live. With Death and Eternity ever before our eyes, we should have no stomach for those thousand little trivialities which make up the padding of life. Were it not for the feeling of hunger and thirst we should perish, left merely to the guidance of reason for the nourishment of our bodies; and were it not that the prizes of life—riches and honours and pleasures—loom large to us through the mist of illusion, and seem as valuable to the individual as in reality they are only to the race, our energies would languish for lack of stimulus, and society would fall to decay. There is indeed a reason—the reason of collective

mankind—at the back of these relative illusions; but it is one too wide-reaching and remote to affect the average individual, whose reasoning is mostly self-regarding. That we should find a relatively irrational and inexplicable interest in the trifles of life is therefore right and natural; and fault comes in only when the means is turned into an end; when what is indeed much, is made everything; and what is the commonest rule of right conduct, is made the supreme and only rule. There is sleep and sleep; the death-deep sleep of the weary that sets its leaden seal on every sense; and the light slumber of the watchful, who springs up alert at the faintest echo of an expected footfall. Of this latter it is said: "I sleep, but my heart waketh." We may lend, but not give ourselves to repose, lest we be drawn down and engulphed in darkness. Sleep is medicine but not food; rest is for the sake of labour and life.

"Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die" is the practical and reflex conclusion of those who have asked themselves this great question as to life's value and have answered it in this way; who remember that they are but dust and believe that they are nothing more. But multitudes live the life of passivity, instinctively, unreflectingly, in complete forgetfulness of death, caring nothing whether or no there be a bottom to the ocean of appearances so long as they can drift comfortably on the top, buoyed up and belted round with illusions. They are indeed "spirits in prison" and cannot be judged "according to men in the flesh," until the Gospel has been preached to them; until the fact of

death is in some way made real to them, rousing them from their lethargy like a cry at midnight; forcing upon them the great riddle on whose answer their fate depends. Thousands however seem to pass through life and out of it, not merely *like* children, but children in fact—as far as spiritual development is concerned; and we can only trust that "God will be sorry for their childishness."

When once the problem of life's meaning has been forced upon us, we must either give it up as unanswerable; or we must answer it by saying that life has no meaning; or by saying that it means this or that. To give it up as unanswerable, is the response of the sluggard who, being roused, turns round upon the other side to resume his broken dreams. But vainly; for no man having once heard the cry can be the same as if he had never heard it. In turning a deaf ear, he has already taken an attitude in regard to it—he has chosen, and thereby created, the world in which he will live. He may go back, by deliberate choice, to the drifting, hand-to-mouth, passive existence of his unawakened state; he can be childlike or childish; but he can never be a child again; aged in an instant by the cold touch of death, he cannot enter again into his mother's womb and be reborn; hereafter his simplicity is but a pose, a grimace, a copying of something that he was, but no longer is, or can be. He may turn his back upon the shadow, but he knows and feels it is there, and in the very studiousness of his endeavour to forget it, confesses his continual sense of its presence.

Better, however, thus to school ourselves to sleep again; to court a studied forgetfulness; to pour our whole being into each passing moment; than to probe down to the bases of life only to discover ourselves the denizens of a phantom city suspended in the air,—to find the whole process of the world's movement a "vicious circle;" without assignable beginning or end outside itself; leading from nowhere to nowhere; the idle flux and reflux of a restless sea on whose waves we are tost up and down with a certain regularity and order, but with no advance, no meaning, no purpose. Better far to choke reflection, to refuse inquiry, to mitigate the fear of the worst with some faint hope of the best, than to stand stript of every comfortable illusion, staring with chattering teeth into the cold, dark void of nothingness. If life have no meaning, if it be a "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing;" if man be dust and nothing more; then "let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die;" let us shut out the light that would paralyze our energy with a sense of futility; that would rob us of our pleasant dreams; if death be the end let us forget the end and live as though it were not; "Remember not man that thou art dust and that unto dust thou shalt return." Yet this remembrance, shut out deliberately by an act of the will, is essentially different from the naïve forgetfulness of those to whom the problem has not been presented for decision. It is a self-chosen attitude in regard to life by which a man approves, creates, makes real to himself the world in which

he is to live and to which he shall adapt his action. In this case, it is a world of dust—of chaos and confusion.

The practical issue of such a position—too violently contradictory of our nature to be very consistently realized—is the disintegration of our whole rational and moral being. It is the abandonment of all desire and effort after unity of thought and action; of all upward straining against the current of inclination, against the deceptiveness of appearance; it is a "letting-go" of all that holds us together and prevents our mind and character falling back into dust. However false or unworthy may be the end which we propose to ourselves as the goal of life, it will bring some sort of system and unity into our action and thought; it will involve some sort of self-sacrifice and effort whereby our personality and independence is asserted against the downward drag of nature levelling everything to the ground; to live for pleasure, or for fame, or for power, may lead to pleasure, fame, or power; it will certainly bring some order and unity into our life; but to live for nothing leads to nothing.

When we consider the heavens in that withering light of modern knowledge which dwarfs the physical significance of our earth (once viewed as the all-important kernel enwrapped in the protecting heavens as in its worthless husk), to that of a solitary flake in a snow-storm, the old problem: "What is man?" seems capable of only two answers: "Little more than a gnat," or "Little less than a god"—"Infinitely insignificant," or

"Infinitely significant." Between the pessimist answer—or no answer—which we have just considered, and the optimist, there are many stages, but no resting-place. If life has a meaning, a value; if there is something worth doing, worth living for (and we are incapable of coherently thinking otherwise, as is evident from the fact that we act at all), we cannot rest in any fractional kind of life, as though it were the whole. The life of sense, the intellectual, moral, or social life; the life of philanthropy, and universal good-will and benevolence—no one of these is self-explanatory and coherent apart from all the rest; nor are all together self-explanatory and coherent apart from the divine life of religion. The will-to-live that works in us inextinguishably, can be satisfied with nothing less than that divine life to which all other stages are subservient and by which they are embraced in one organic unity. Anything short of this sharing of the divine universal life leaves us still in the dust,—struggling upward it may be, but doomed to relapse. Neither mind nor heart can rest long in that Naturalism which gives principality to the life of sensation, and explains intellect and morality and social life in reference to this; nor in the worship of Humanity which leaves unanswered the question as to the kind of life which we should secure for ourselves and others, and ignores the fact that Humanity too is dust and must return to dust; that the race, like the unit, must pass away as a shadow; nor in intellectualism; nor in truth for truth's sake; nor

right for right's sake. All these systems live, and save their elements of truth, as parts of that Whole which is crowned by the life of religion. Cut off from that living unity they crumble to dust; because so severed, they are incoherent and unreal.

Multiform in its manifestation and virtuality, our life is but one life; nor does it find adequate actuation and expression save in those actions in which we consciously make and show ourselves to be what we really are—obedient, free, sympathetic instruments of the Divine Will which operates in and through us. In such actions we make and feel our reality, and are delivered from the shadowiness and incoherence of merely phenomenal life; while phenomenal life itself derives a dependent reality and substance from the divine.

It matters little to us as conscious beings what we are passively, and in spite of ourselves; what we are, relatively to others. What we are to ourselves; what we believe and will ourselves to be; what we act as if we were, is everything; that, we *are* in the fullest sense. A stick or stone exists for us, but not for itself. Who would care for the immortality of a mummy, or of a tranced unself-conscious existence?

In the same free act by which we create the world of our choice and give it relative reality, we also create ourselves and become to ourselves what we freely choose ourselves to be—whatever be the absolute value of our choice in other eyes. If we reckon ourselves as dust in a world of dust, dust we are. And yet our soul cannot cleave to the dust;

cannot eat dust and be satisfied. Its will is not realized or equalled by such an object; nor by anything short of what lifts it to the right hand of God above all that is measurable. We are made to cling, not to the dust, but to God—"It is good for me to cleave unto God." Even those heavens which shrivel us up to nothing so long as we cleave to the dust, shall be then shrivelled up in our esteem: "They shall perish, but Thou remainest; they shall all wax old as doth a garment, . . . but Thou art the self-same, and Thy years shall not fail."

Not humility, but cynicism and bitter self-contempt is gendered by the realization of their mortality and physical nothingness in those to whom the physical is the only reality. Humility implies a comparison of ourselves with something good and great that dwarfs us in our own esteem. The indefinite bulk of space, the aimless onward rolling of countless æons, may bewilder, but it does not subdue or humble us. We feel helpless under the tyranny of force and matter, but we despise and resent it; we know that as conscious, free, and personal, the meanest of us is nobler than all the stars put together.

But the truth by humbling, exalts us, and by exalting, humbles us. It shows us that our body is the symbol of our spiritual being; that apart from God we are spiritually dust, and to dust we must return; that to live His life, to give expression to his Will and Action in us and through us, is to bring a satisfying unity into our otherwise unmeaning and chaotic life. This is the kind of

action by which we most fully assert our personality, our independence of the machinery of the lower life; by which we use it, instead of being used by it, and make each new stage attained to be a stepping-stone to higher things.

But even in the downward attraction of each lower level that we have passed; in the gravitation of our soul towards the dust and nothingness from which God has lifted it, we must recognize the Divine Will which finds utterance in every natural law. In a sense, it is God who tempts us and it is God who helps us against temptation. As Jacob wrestled with God for His blessing; so, as self-forming beings we have to wrestle with Him for each breath of our soul's life. He draws us up from the dust with one hand, and down to the dust with the other. He thrusts us from Him and pulls towards Him. But He wills that we should wrestle with Him and conquer Him; and hides Himself only that we may seek Him; for to seek Him is to live.

II.

THE STABILITY OF FAITH.[1]

Now Faith is the substance of things hoped for.—Heb. xi. 1.

The recognition of the dominant part played by the will in the assent of faith furnishes an answer to many difficulties experienced by believers themselves who are troubled as to the reality of their

[1] That faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue which can be induced by no natural skill according to prescribed rules or methods, is the common belief of all Christians; but it is also one that can, and has been, made to shelter a form of pure subjectivism

faith owing to their inability to explain the natural side of the process in a way satisfactory to themselves or to others. For which of us does not almost daily meet with Christians who are seriously troubled as to the sincerity of their faith, and whose trouble, on examination, is found to be rooted in the misapprehension—that unless they feel towards the mysteries of faith, all, and more than all, that sense of helpless, irresistible persuasion that they feel in regard to their own existence, there is something wrong, something untruthful and insincere in their professing a certainty which they have not got?

which tends to do away with all freedom and responsibility in the matter and to throw the whole burden and blame of unbelief upon God, who gives to one man the gift which He withholds from another. Whence the need of maintaining that faith has also a natural aspect, and involves an orderly process of the mind and will, of which a well-instructed Christian ought to be able to give such an account as to exclude all confusion of the supernatural with the miraculous or the capricious. The following words express the same thought: "Pour que la definition de l'acte de foi soit philosophiquement recevable, il faut qu'elle implique le point d'insertion *naturel* sur lequel le surnaturel puisse se greffer: il faut trouver une faculte *naturelle* qui devienne son point reel d'adaptation en nous." . . .

"Cette faculté naturelle de croire, voilà donc le point précis d'insertion du surnaturel en nous." . . .

"Introduire dans la definition de la foi le concept de la croyance naturelle, c'est donc l'unique moyen de legitimer, aux yeux de la critique philosophique, la synthese des deux ordres, de donner à notre acte de foi un charactère de haute philosophie et de trouver enfin un large terrain de reconciliation possible." (Ed. Pechegut, *Revue du Clergé Français*, Dec. 1, 1901.)

We may also cordially endorse the words of Abbé Gayraud's somewhat hostile criticism of M. Pechegut, when he says (*Revue du Clergé Français*, Dec. 15, 1901): "Est-il besoin de remarquer ici que 'la faculté naturelle de croire' que nous possedons, a ete observee et mise en lumière longtemps avant MM. Olle-Laprune Brunetière et

This is a fallacy which occasionally drives people out of the Church; and far more often prevents their coming into it. It is, of course, by no means the only cause of the rapidly spreading decay of faith, but it is a sufficiently prominent one to be worth a few moments' attention.

In this country, the mistake is encouraged by inevitable contact and intercourse with rationalistic Christianity to which the idea of faith as a voluntary certainty is unfamiliar; which assumes that to believe, means, to hold a very firm personal opinion with regard to some religious question, which

Balfour? Je ne rappellerai que S. Augustin. . . . La question est élucidée depuis longtemps et L'Ecole en cela a beaucoup devancé la philosophie moderne."

According to both the older and the later theology of the Schools the *natural* act of belief is an assent of the mind not forced directly by intellectual motives, but enjoined upon the mind by the will in response to moral motives. Its supernatural subjective certitude is due, according to the older view, to the action of grace upon the will affecting the intellect indirectly; according to the later, it is due to the direct action of grace upon the intellect, conditioned by the previous act of the will. The difference is rather psychological than theological. In both views grace so collaborates with nature that the act of faith is supernatural without being in any sense miraculous.

To say, "I believe because I cannot help it, but do not know why," may be a comfortable position for oneself, but it is of little comfort to others who are not conscious of any such unaccountable prepossession. But to reconcile the notions of faith as a free gift of God, and as also a reasonable service of which a reasonable account can be rendered, is a task at which theologians have laboured with very different results. The play of the will in the affairs of the understanding is a difficult problem which has been solved, now in one way, now in another. Comparatively recent years have seen a reaction, inside as well as outside the Church, against that purely rationalistic mind-theory which views our judgments as determined lawfully only by the laws of dialectic,

mere opinion, especially in such obscure matters, can never reach the firmness of mathematical truths. Now many certainly speak as though they had imbibed this notion; as though, in reciting the Creed, they were giving a summary of their own private opinions, and not rather making a solemn promise or vow to stand by these truths through

and regards the direct influence of the will as wholly illegitimate in matters of belief. Influenced by these assumptions many apologists had departed from the simpler view of St. Thomas Aquinas, and had thereby found themselves in a dilemma from which there was no escape save in a return to the less artificial mind-theory which underlay the older teaching. "The understanding of one who believes," says that teaching (*Summa Theologica*, p. II-IIæ. q. ii. a. 1. ad. 3m. et alibi passim), "is determined not by the reasoning faculty, but by the will; and, therefore, 'assent' stands here for an act of the understanding so far as it is determined by the will." ("Intellectus credentis determinatur ad unum, non per rationem sed per voluntatem; et ideo assensus hic accipitur pro actu intellectus secundum quod à voluntate determinatur ad unum.")

According to this, it is much easier to see how faith can, like every good movement of the will, be supernatural without being supernormal. Reasoning can show us what we ought to like or love, but it cannot make us like it or love it. The heart is in the hand of the Mover of hearts. Granted that there are free beliefs which are legitimate matter of choice, to be decided not by the response of abstract reasoning alone, but by that of the whole soul and character, it follows that faith in the last resort depends upon Him who, without forcing, inclines the heart by His grace which He offers to all men at all times, though in different measures of sufficiency or superabundance. Faith is thus an object of choice proposed to us by our reason as good and morally obligatory; but not as intellectually irresistible. God both guides the reason and inclines the heart—supernaturally, but not miraculously, nor by any assignable departure from the known laws of our spiritual life. Thus the understanding can apprehend and set forth those objective reasons which would make men desire to give their whole will to the work of believing what cannot be demonstrated; but thus to see the reasonableness of an act, still leaves the will free to choose or reject what is reasonable.

thick and thin; they seem to forget that the Creed is an expression of a resolve on the part of the will, far more than an expression of an intuition on the part of the mind.

Another source of the evil, connected with this, is the prominence necessarily given in our age and country to apologetic instructions—oral and written; to controversy and argumentation of all kinds—whereby an impression is insensibly created that faith depends upon arguments as upon its cause, and that it stands and falls therewith; whence again it is plain that no belief so supported can satisfy the mind as completely as simple axioms and first principles do. No doubt we are often told that these arguments are but a condition, and that the will is the real, effectual cause of faith; but this statement is too occasional, too indistinct, to obliterate the deeper impression created by the ceaseless din of argument and controversy, and hence comes the very prevalent disposition on the part of the educated or half-educated to rest their belief directly upon arguments, and thus to slip unconsciously from faith into rationalism.

The only remedy for the disease is the clear and frequent reassertion of the part played by the will in the free assent of faith; for it is not merely that we must will to apply our mind to considering the motives and grounds of faith, or that certain moral dispositions and sympathies are needed for the appreciation of the grounds and motives; but given all this intelligence and appreciation of the grounds of faith, the act itself is a free assent elicited from

the mind — not passively under compulsion of evidence, but actively under compulsion of the will.

Faith then is not a passive and forced belief, but an actively free belief. Under the force of evidence our mind is passive and receptive like a mirror; or, as our eyes are, under the influence of objects duly presented to them. When the evidence is put before us clearly, we cannot resist or withhold our consent, even if we would. But in the case of a free assent like faith, we have to assert ourselves. It is not a case of "letting go," but of "holding on;" not of drifting down stream, but of beating our way up against the stream. It is an occasion for action and energy; for asserting our personality by opposing ourselves to, and resisting natural causes, instead of losing our identity by submitting to them passively and becoming part of the machinery of nature. It is just in these beliefs of our free choice that we are most human and least mechanical; it is in them that we determine our own character and life and end,—in some sort, creating for ourselves the world in which we choose to live; it is by them, and for them, that we shal be judged at the last, as worthy of eternal life or death.

These free beliefs are, as such, the noblest furniture of our mind, far nobler than those forced assents that we have to yield to necessary and natural truths, general or particular. These latter may be compared to those instincts and acquired habits to which we commit the greater part of our

conduct, not because semi-unconscious mechanical action is better in itself, but because hereby our attention is liberated for the exercise of those free, conscious, intelligent acts which are proper to man as man, and distinguish him from automata. Similarly, the natural and necessary beliefs that are forced on us by evidence, are wholly subservient to, and for the sake of, those free and self-chosen beliefs, which are the fruit of our own action and mental life.

But what seems so important to observe is that, a certain sense of unreality, one might almost say, of pretence, is the normal and natural accompaniment of these freely-chosen, actively-sustained beliefs; and that this sense of unrest and infirmity is in no wise incompatible with the deepest and most genuine faith. For faith has it in common with opinion, that it does not quiet or satisfy the mind according to the laws of thought,[1] and by motives proper to the mind, although it secures a greater than scientific certainty through the extrinsic influence of the will, supplementing the defects of sense and reason.

While then our necessary beliefs are self-supporting, our free-beliefs need to be supported by the continual exercise of the will; the former are like the things we see, that force themselves on our vision; the latter are like the pictures we construct

1 "Alio modo intellectus assentit alicui non quia sufficienter moveatur ab objecto proprio, sed per quamdam electionem voluntarie declinans in unam partem magis quam in aliam," &c. (*Summa Theol.* II-IIæ. q. 1. a. iv.; cf. *ibid.* q. 2. a. 1. c.)

in our imagination, that depend on our will for their maintenance.

For when (for one reason or another) we *choose* to believe what we are not *forced* to believe, it means that we take and treat as a fact, what, relatively to our perception, is not a fact.[1] It means, not only that we speak and act as though we saw it to be true (for often we do not act up to our faith), but that we think and reason and argue in our own minds as though we saw it to be true. And yet all the while, we do not *see* it to be true, but hold it true by an act of our will. It is somewhat as when a mathematician assumes a certain value of x, and builds up all his calculations on that assumption. So with faith; what my natural reason proclaims to be bread, I freely believe to be the Body of Christ. I not only worship it and receive it as such; but in my reasonings and reflections I build on that assumption; and bring the rest of my mind into agreement with this belief.

Now in all this there seems to be the same element of pretence and unreality that comes into mere fictions and working hypotheses. I seem to be saying from the teeth outwards that something is white, while in my heart, all the time, I know it to be black. Yet the difference is that, in the case of hypotheses, and fictions and other freely chosen beliefs, the motive of our choice is not such as to make it a matter of supreme moral obligation; whereas in the case of faith we hold to the belief

[1] Cf. Præstet fides supplementum
Sensuum defectui

in obedience to the command of God as made known by the voice of conscience. And furthermore, we hold to it with that degree of willingness which He commands. Did we see the truth as it lies in God's mind, our intellect would be irresistibly forced to assent to it more firmly than to any natural truth; but since we do not, and cannot, we throw our whole will, without any reserve, into the act of belief, that it may have as much certainty for us as our will can possibly give to it. But all this will never prevent that seeming black to us, which God tells us and which we sincerely believe to be white, which we treat as though it were white in our conduct and in our reasonings; and therefore a certain sense of unreality and fiction is an essential part of the trial of faith.

Nor is this peculiar to truths of faith. It holds equally for those moral principles and ideals whose values we accept on testimony before we have come to prove it by experience; it holds even of physical and scientific truths, so far as we take them on faith, not seeing the reasons for them; for there are numbers, for instance, who believe firmly that they must die, who regulate their conduct, thought, and speech by that belief, and yet to whom it is such a fiction and unreality that death comes in the end as a surprise and shock.

But it must not be forgotten that a free belief which costs us at first some effort to sustain and live up to, in process of time comes to be woven into the very fabric of our thought and life, so that even were our will to change, and our faith to

fail, it would need some effort to cast aside the belief and to free ourselves from its influence. To a large extent this is due to the natural growth of mental habits; and the apparent reality and firmness that it gives to our faith is not due to any strengthening of the will to believe, or to what deserves the name of "virtue." At best, it is the removal of a certain natural difficulty in believing, for which relief we ought to be thankful; seeing at the same time that we do not turn it to an occasion of slothfulness in faith. Thus manual labour, which at first calls for self-conquest and will-effort, eventually through the mere strengthening of the muscles ceases to make any such demand. This muscular habit must not be confounded with virtue, which means an increased readiness of *will*, a habit of self-conquest. So neither must the negative easiness in belief which comes from custom, imitation, or even thoughtlessness, be confounded with that easiness which comes from an increased goodness and strength of will subduing the mind, in obedience to the Will of God. This latter is compatible with all that feeling of unreality, pretence, and dreaminess which so needlessly disturbs those who hear that "the certainty of faith" is the highest of all certainties, and who falsely conclude that doubt about faith should *seem* to them as impossible as doubt about their own existence; which of course it does not, ought not, and cannot; else, faith were not free.

There is some danger—is there not?—lest we who have for so many years, perhaps from infancy,

been accustomed to speak and think and act on the suppositions of faith; who have lived chiefly in the society of those governed by these beliefs; who have had the adventitious support that education, custom, tradition, and example can lend to faith,—there is some danger lest we confound this negative facility in believing, due to the removal of difficulty, with that positive facility due to the conquest of difficulty,—with that strengthening of the "will to believe" implied in the growth of faith. The strength which these causes add to a belief is no guarantee of its truth; since they operate no less effectually to confirm the errors of misbelievers than the faith of believers, and are therefore a curse or a blessing according to circumstances. These crutches provided for faith by natural habit, education, and example, may spare us from putting too great a tax on our legs, may support us when else our strength would fail; but it is the support of a wooden prop, not the vital support of intelligent virtue; and it may well be that the faith of those who lack the facility is stronger than ours, for the very reason that it needs to be stronger.

The more our beliefs have become customary to us, and have been wrought into the tissue of life and mind, and the more they have become independent of the exercise of our free-will, and of the virtue of faith, the less are we able to put ourselves in the condition of those whose belief is the fruit of faith and of faith alone; still if we cannot feel, at least we can understand their state of mind and soul, and so far minister to its necessities.

III.

FAITH, AS A CHOICE.

With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.—Rom. x. 10.

In regard to our beliefs and assents our mind is both active and passive, determining and determined; it forms itself and is formed by other causes and influences outside itself. It is only in so far as it is freely self-forming and active, that it is delivered from the determinism of Nature, from being merely a wheel in the mechanism of the universe; or that it defines, asserts, and creates its own distinct personality as "other" than the world, to which it opposes itself. Those who consider the automatism of habit and instinct to be the noblest form of human activity, to which free and conscious action is but as a means to an end; who value the ease of virtue as a release from the difficulty of that self-asserting, self-creating action by which we strike up against the stream of necessity, instead of passively floating in a dream down the currents of inclination; who fail to recognize that the use and justification of habit is but to free us for wider, higher, and more strenuous energizing and self-creation—such thinkers will consistently look upon faith and other free assents as a derogation from pure intellectualism; and will regard necessary and irresistible truths as the noblest possession of our mind. That they are an essential and indispensable possession; that they are the prerequisite condition of the very possibility of free assents must be allowed. But consistently

with the only sane view of the relation of habit to action; of determinism to freedom; of nature to individuality, we must say that necessary beliefs are valuable simply as making free beliefs possible; that it profits us to be moved, and helped, and directed just so far as thereby we are enabled more largely to move, help, and direct ourselves; and that therefore faith and free assent is the great end of our mental life; and understanding, but a means to, and a condition of faith.

Not that the will can make that to be true in itself which is not true, except so far as its own decision, with all the resulting consequences, introduces a new series of facts into the world; or so far as a freely chosen belief, whether false or true, determines the working of our thought and life, and is therefore pregnant with practical issues. But even in regard to facts not created or creatable by its own act, the will can, may, and at times ought, to make that a solid fact relatively to our life and action, which is not a fact relatively to our understanding; it may resolve to live, inwardly and outwardly, by a truth which is intellectually doubtful, when that doubt is not so strong as to make the belief ridiculous. And when it is so weak as to make unbelief ridiculous, the will is *bound* to come in and supplement the defect of the understanding. To refuse to act or argue upon a truth till it is irresistibly evident, is to cut down our beliefs to a few barren tautologies, and to paralyze almost entirely our inner and outer activity. Save for the very few that have been forced upon our passive

assent by evidence and direct experience, the great mass of our beliefs, piled up on that narrow basis, are reversible, and depend for their stability on the action or permission of the will. We have just enough "necessary truth," as it is called, in our mind, to guide us in our search for further truth; and to secure that our free beliefs, if prudently formed, will ever approximate more and more closely to things as they are. In the conduct of our mind, as in that of our life, we are left to our own sagacity and prudence,—to the wise or foolish use of our faculties and of our experience. In both cases risk and venture are the conditions of success; and good luck has to be balanced against ill. Only in the rarest and least important matters, do we, or can we, philosophically suspend our judgment. The ceaseless weaving-process of our thought hurries on our assent as imperatively as the pressure of outward life forces our practical decisions. Later, we may have to unravel what we have laboriously wrought into the tissue of our mind, but for the time being we must say Yea or Nay! and face the consequences for better or for worse. For except when we are merely theorizing, most of our beliefs are so inextricably bound up, both as causes and effects, with our practical life, that we cannot afford to remain indetermined.

In the ethical order we praise him alone "who might have transgressed yet did not transgress; might have done evil but did not do evil;" else his innocence were not his own, but something imposed upon him. As soon then as we recognize that the

formation of our mind, the selection of our beliefs, is committed to our liberty, we see that such free beliefs are more truly our own, than the necessary beliefs that are imposed upon our passive acceptance; that by them alone we are characterized, and are cut off from the general mechanism of nature as relatively independent beings.

The pure in heart shall see the truth, means that—given equal data, and the same intellectual advantage—the morally better man will strike the truth more nearly, will be more happy in his guesses and ventures, since he is more in harmony with reality, more subtly responsive to its hints. Not only the mind but the whole soul is the organ of truth. Successful scientific thought—unless when it deals with the barest forms and abstract fabrications of the mind; with the mere receptacles and frames of knowledge—asks for patience, industry, self-denial, honesty, candour, detachment, humility, love of truth, courage and the whole *catena* of gospel virtues. Far more are these moral dispositions needed for the fabrication of our practical mind, *i.e.*, of the whole body of our beliefs concerning the end and meaning of our life, and of the steps by which that end is to be reached; for these are problems bearing directly on our affections, and in regard to which, pain and pleasure, hope and fear, joy and sorrow, come in to bias our judgment. In science and history many beliefs are forced upon us and our will intervenes for the most part only indirectly. But in practical thought the first principle, and all that hangs upon it, is of free choice.

Our notions of right or wrong in particular cases depend upon our belief as to the general meaning of life; and this, upon our belief concerning the world as a whole. It is plain that, we who accept the Christian view of man's supernatural destiny, hold it on faith, by a voluntary act which sustains that view for us, and gives it a relative reality and stability which it could never derive from the understanding; our will creates for us that supernatural system in which we elect to live, and gives it substance and reality—for that is *real* for us which we treat as reality, and to which we accommodate our inward and outward life. At any moment we can say No! and our whole world vanishes into nothing like a cloud-city.

Apart from revelation, all that the understanding, working upon the data of moral sense, and guided by the ethical sympathies of a pure heart, can force upon us is, the duty, the rightfulness, of freely assenting to what may be called the religious view of life—the duty of a certain natural faith in God and in man's divine destiny. Far less can it force upon us an immoral or pessimistic or simply sceptical view. But it does force us, in every free act, implicitly or explicitly to choose, or to modify, some one or other possible view of life—rational, religious, sensual, earthly or devilish. If we stir at all, it must be in some direction—towards some point of the compass.

Since then no theory of life as a whole, can be coercively evident to the mind, irrespective of moral sentiments and sympathies, it rests with each of us,

by an act of will to create (that is, to give relative reality and substance to) the sort of world to which we shall accommodate our thought and action. To do so is our fundamental duty; it is the implicit choice upon which the rightness of every other choice is founded. It might seem pleasanter could we evade this responsibility, and were our mind, in this point, passive like a mirror, that reflects whatever rays strike upon its surface according to an inevitable necessity. But if free action is our very life and being, it is manifestly more consonant with our self-forming nature that each of us should construct for himself the kind of world in which he would live, and that he should be judged in this matter according as his mind and will is more in sympathy with God's, and according as, by purity of heart, he knows himself more truly and deeply, and discerns more clearly the kind of life which he was created to lead.

IV.

FAITH, AS A NECESSITY.

Without faith it is impossible to please God.—Heb. xi. 6.

Faith which is the foundation of our spiritual life is before all things a personal relation between ourselves and Christ; it is an affection of our whole soul in regard to Him; and by no means a merely intellectual relation of our mind to a truth or a system of truths. It is true, in a sense, to say that the "object" of our faith is the Apostles' Creed, which is a bundle of propositions set forth, commented on, and considerably amplified by the

Catholic Church. But faith in the teacher comes before faith in the teaching. We must believe in Christ and in the Church, before we believe in what they teach us; and it is with this prior faith we are concerned.

The three "theological virtues," as they are called, of Faith, Hope, and Charity, supplement the essential dependence and insufficiency of the soul, by wedding it to God, as to its natural support and prop. *Væ soli*, woe to him that is alone, is the doom of every human soul that lives in proud separation from God and man. Away from society our mind would lie dormant, our tongue silent; we should be helpless, loveless. It is far more by the mind of others, the strength of others, the love of others that we live, than by our own. We are essentially members of society, and broken off from its unity we perish like twigs plucked from the tree. Separate, we have no power of subsistence or self-maintenance.

But in respect to the highest life of our soul, to live, is to lean upon God, and to appropriate His life; it is to avail ourselves of His light, and of His strength, and of His love; for here we not only fail ourselves, but our fellow-creatures fail us. In other practical matters, our beliefs are rightly and reasonably determined by the society in which we live; nor do we seek to investigate for ourselves, independently, what universal experience is agreed about. But in the most practical of all matters, namely, the ultimate end of life and the means whereby it is to be attained, human experience fails

us, and human reason gives too wavering and uncertain an answer to stablish us in the hour of temptation; and He only can assure us, who is Himself our first beginning and our last end; and the means whereby we are to reach it—who is the Way and the Truth and the Life.

Our reason cannot go round and compass these truths which are at the extreme boundary of its horizon. It can touch them at a stretch, timidly, uncertainly; but it cannot fully apprehend, much less comprehend them. Yet of all truths they are the most vital, the best worth knowing. Why then has God set them so far and made them so difficult? Not because He delights to puzzle us; or to tempt us by ingeniously wrapping the truth in riddles. He who makes a riddle strives to hide what is plain, whereas God's whole endeavour in revelation is to make plain what is hid; He "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." It is because of our present state of intellectual and moral imperfection, that He is simply unable to give us more light than we have got or can receive. He longs to give us more, and to lead us, as quickly as may be, to that full light which they enjoy who see the Truth unveiled and face to face; who speak with It "as a friend with a friend." "I have many things to say to you," He tells us, "but you cannot bear them now." And again: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Our mental eye cannot bear more than a certain limited intensity of light. Children question us about fifty things that we would gladly explain to

them, but their minds are insufficiently prepared by education to understand our explanations; they would in many cases completely misunderstand them, and be hurt by them. "Cast not your pearls before swine," says our Saviour, 'lest they turn again and rend you." Reasons to children are often pearls before swine. How often our own conduct or the conduct of others is better unexplained, than explained to those who cannot possibly know the infinite context which justifies it!

But besides this mental incapacity and ignorance, our moral incapacity makes us unfit to receive the full light all at once. We may not give people information, however true, that we know will create insuperable temptations for them, and will be an occasion of ruin to them. It were often wiser to let a boy think he must earn his bread, than to reveal to him prematurely the fact of his independence. There must therefore be an infinity of truths in God's mind which as yet we are mentally and morally incapable of receiving; and for this reason, as well as for others, His revelation, being only a fractional truth, must necessarily seem mysterious, disjointed and even perverse.

It is therefore, not of God's free choice, but of the necessary nature of things, that the finite intelligence must fail at the points where things emerge from, and remerge into, the Infinite; and yet it is just at these points that those great truths lie touching "the things that belong to our peace." If then, at the best of times, in our calmest moments of clear intuition, our

reason's grasp on these life-truths is so imperfect, how shall it hold to them in the hour of passion and temptation, when we do not even want to believe, and when our weak eyes are blinded with the fire and smoke of our turbulent affections?

In the affairs of our natural and outward life, common prudence tells us to trust the judgment of our friends and advisers in any crisis when we are like to lose our heads, and be carried away into hasty utterances and actions, through the heat of anger or of any other excitement; that is, we are to put aside our own judgment and not to try to see, when we are consciously incapable of seeing straight; but by an act of our *will* we are to assent to, and act on, the judgment of others. This is the whole principle of faith; which is, everywhere, a holding on *by the will* to truths which for the moment the mind does not see, or is incapable of seeing. Even when I adhere to my former good resolution and refuse to open the question again in the moment of temptation, this is a sort of faith in my better self—an appeal from self drunk to self sober. It is a voluntary refusal to examine in the twilight or the dark, a matter already examined and decided in the full light of day; it is a wilful blind holding on to what I saw before, but cannot see now. And so far, faith is a condition of success not only in the spiritual and moral life, but in the natural and secular life. Men who shilly-shally at the crisis of action, who distrust their past clear judgments, and attempt to decide in the moment of confusion, are doomed to failure and defeat.

Much more needful is it however, and indeed altogether indispensable to salvation that, in the dark pass of temptation, we should reach out with our will and lay firm hold of God's immutable word, and so steady ourselves against the shock of doubt. Nor is it only an expediency, but a positive and most imperative duty laid upon us by conscience. The same inner voice that obliges us to morality and holiness, obliges us to the essential conditions of holiness, and of these faith is the most essential: "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that would draw near to God," who would more perfectly resemble God in holiness, "must believe that He exists and that He is the rewarder of them that seek Him." All our beliefs are but closer determinations of this simple creed touching the fact of God and the nature of God; and all our doubts are as to one or the other of these articles. When we rightly estimate the goodness and love of God, we are tempted to doubt the fact of His existence; when we are convinced as to this fact, we question if He can be all good and loving. He is, to our dim sight, either a beautiful dream or an unbeautiful reality.

And yet if, in spite of all appearance to the contrary, we do not hold fast to the belief that Love and Goodness is at the base of everything; that Truth and Right will infallibly prevail in the long run; that every obedience to conscience, however trivial and secret, will in the end meet with just reward, moral life becomes a simple impossibility. Therefore God, in the voice of

conscience, commands faith and bids us put away any doubt and hesitation which is equivalent to moral suicide. As in business matters and practical affairs a man does wrong by indulging a tendency to indecision after he has arrived at prudent and sufficient certainty; so in the highest business of life a man sins against God and his own soul who gives entrance to enervating doubt, after he has received sufficient light to make him responsible.

By faith, in the fuller sense, we therefore mean, holding on to the truth with our will, in obedience to God or to conscience; and because we recognize that it is *wrong* to doubt; and that, by doing so, we imperil our souls. And this is true alike of that mere outline of revelation which is vouchsafed to all men; and of its fuller determinations in the Christian and Catholic Religion.

V.

THE TEMPER OF FAITH.

Now, Lord, dost Thou let Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word.—Luke ii. 29.

The bondage and entanglement of the mind in face of the inscrutable perplexities of God's ways, is part of the necessary trial of finite intelligence slowly struggling towards the light—towards the truth that makes it free and bursts its bonds asunder. Love presents itself to us in blood-stained garments and terrible aspect; Wisdom comes to us decked out in the cap and bells of folly; and it needs strong-minded faith to resist or to dispel these

disturbing illusions created by the murky atmosphere with which we are surrounded. Faith of this patient kind often merits, even here, a rift in the fog, and a sharp clear glance into the brightness beyond, and lives, in the dark intervals, on these flashes of sunshine. For some, perhaps, the mist never lifts on this side of death; for many, it clears away at, or towards, the end—a grace we beg when we say:

> Largire lumen vespere
> Quo vita nunquam decidat.[1]

God seems, not seldom, to mingle the dawn of everlasting vision with the vesper-light of faith whose sad day is passing away in peace. This is his guerdon who has fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith, patiently, wisely, strongly, not seeking a sign, nor dictating the terms of his capitulation, as he who said: "Except I see the print in His hands, except I thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe"—the guerdon of Simeon, the type of all such, whose evening was gladdened by the dawn of another sun, making for him one unbroken day of time and eternity.

And of what sort was he? "A just man" fretted and saddened by the crookednesses and irregularities of life; by the exaltation of the proud and untruthful, and the depression of the lowly and sincere; consumed with a zeal for God's House, hungering and thirsting after justice. "A God-fearing man" (*timoratus*); full of rever-

[1] O shed o'er life's declining day
The light that passeth not away.

ential awe; sensible of that infinite gulf between the Absolute mind and ours, which is wide as the East from the West, deep as the earth below the heavens; not surprised therefore or childishly indignant at the seeming strangeness and perversity of God's words and ways when meted in the tiny balance of our reason. Hence, doubtless, a silent man, internally and externally; "God is in heaven and thou art on earth, wherefore let thy words be few"—not hasty to explain God's ways to himself or to others, or to jump at tempting hypotheses, as though he had been God's councillor standing by and advising when the foundations of the earth were laid and the heavens spread abroad as a curtain; swift to hear, to observe, to remember; slow to speak, to affirm, to dogmatize; reverently uncertain, knowing that Eternal Truth flies from rough and violent hands, and will not brook syllogistic chains and fetters.

Again: he was himself awaiting the consolation of Israel; crying, "O that Thou wouldst burst through the dark clouds and come down. Come Lord and delay no longer; my soul hath fainted for Thy salvation saying: When wilt Thou comfort me?" He was not merely just, not merely striving after that impersonal objective order and equality, which is God's will on earth; not merely rendering to each one his due, from a love of right and equity, from a desire of abstract justice; but he was "charitable" in that he sought the good of others from a motive of personal love in their regard. He was one who, though living apart, yet in his thought

and affections lived wholly out of himself and for the sake of others, knowing well that they often minister most effectually to the common good of others who but stand and wait. A strong enthusiast for the salvation of Israel, kindling his heart with dreams and visions of the glory to be revealed; yet not crying aloud, nor lifting up his voice in the street, not agitating, directing, advising; not stretching unbidden hands of faithless mistrust to steady the tottering ark, or to sustain the trembling columns of Church and State: full of unshakable confidence and of the hope that cries: "It is good to wait silently for God's salvation;" and, "If thou wouldst only suffer in silence, assuredly thou wouldst see the advent of God's help."[1]

Again: "The Holy Spirit was with him;" for only by the Spirit are the deep things of God, the truths underlying appearances, apprehended. The animal man, like the animals, lives only in the present, on the surface; he is not necessarily a sensualist, a Herod, for whom Christ has never a word save the eloquence of silence; but is one who confounds seeming with being; who takes one fraction of the soul—the senses, or the intellect—as though it were the whole man; who gives exclusive value to some one aspect of our many-sided experience to the prejudice of the rest; forgetting that God and Truth and Reality and Life are apprehended not by the senses alone, not by the sentiments, not by science and metaphysics, but

[1] "Bonum est præstolari cum silentio salutare Dei." "Si tu scis pati et tacere procul dubio videbis auxilium Dei venire ad te."

by the whole action of the whole man—"with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength."

Finally: He had received an answer from the Spirit that he should not die till he had seen the Lord's Christ. Already his faith and hope had been rewarded by an answer to his unspoken desire, by a rift in the cloud and a glimpse beyond the veil. But now his hope is crowned, not with full fruition, but with the prophetic certitude that makes faith no longer an effort, but an irresistible conviction, as satisfying as vision itself. This is the light that replaces the evening twilight, for those who through life have laboured hard to keep the faith, and who already begin to enter into their rest. To his senses and narrower reason nothing is apparent to Simeon but a helpless babe lying in his arms; but heart speaks to heart, and the Spirit discerns the deep things of the Spirit, and reveals to him the Salvation prepared before the face of all people; the Light of the Gentiles and the Glory of Israel.

VI.

RATIONALISM.

He who will not receive the Kingdom of God as a child shall not enter therein.—Luke xviii. 17.

As far as concerns the further elaboration of the belief in God the Rewarder, no one will contend that the ignorance of those who are territorially removed from the Church's reach should be held culpable; but we are apt to forget that there are

other than territorial barriers which are just as effectual in holding the truth from open and willing eyes. The facts and principles that we have taken on faith from our parents and guides during childhood and which we have never verified for ourselves, form a large proportion of our mental furniture, even in the case of the most independent minds; and our ability to see and criticize depends entirely on the sum total of the facts and principles of which we are in possession; and, what with our ignorance and our positive errors, there are numbers of truths to which even the most intelligent and enlightened are irremediably blind.

Early training and education often make it psychologically impossible for the light of truth to enter into certain corners and crevices of our mind. Again, it is obvious that to profit by a teacher we must at least understand his language; but it is not less true that we must understand his mind-language, that is, his modes of thought, his categories, his assumptions, his fundamental standpoints. But here the agnostic, or the non-Christian, is very often as far removed from the understanding of the Church's voice as if he were buried in the heart of pagandom. Again, a man must be some way acceptable to us before we enter into converse with him. Christ indeed drew all men of good-will to His side; but the Christian is not Christ; and is often repellent rather than attractive; so that again we have, in effect, the disadvantage of distance. Often it is the eternal scandal of Christian inconsistency, as contrasting

with the better lives of some who make no profession; often it is the unintelligence, the ignorance, the violent dogmatism of clumsy and unworthy exponents of the faith, that repels those who are more in sympathy with the gentleness of Christ, than are many of His followers. For the loudest and most forward champions of any cause are not the most likely to do it credit; it is they who delight to accentuate and exaggerate differences, to minimize agreements, to keep old wounds open, and under cover of zeal for truth, to gratify that tyrannical instinct which bids us force our opinions on others, just because they are our own opinions.

Such a spirit is peculiarly repellent to those whose best disposition for faith lies precisely in their sense of the extreme feebleness of the human mind in presence of the problems of eternity. However essential dogma may be to religion, yet what is called the "dogmatizing spirit" is near of kin to the narrow rationalistic spirit, and as far removed as possible from the spirit of faith. The desire to unify, systematize, illustrate and explain the disjointed fragments of eternal truth which God has given us in revelation, has its legitimate sphere, but may easily step beyond it and become inordinate. It is an ease and rest for the mind to see, or even to conjecture, the connection and purport of God's mysteries; yet it is a luxury rather than a necessity or a right; and if too freely indulged in it soon comes to be regarded as a right. It was the abuse of scholasticism that gave birth to that narrow

rationalism which is answerable for the prevalent decay of faith in modern times.

Because, to some extent, revelation may be harmonized into one system with the truths of reason and the facts of experience, it does not follow that such harmony is the best or the essential condition of its credibility. This thirst for clearness, completeness, comprehensibility; this impatience of shadows and half-lights; this forgetfulness of the essentially analogical nature of all our conceptions of spiritual and eternal realities, is altogether antagonistic to faith. When we find the principles of arithmetic, or of experimental science, used together with the principles of strict revelation, to deduce necessary conclusions, with no allowance made for the symbolic and inadequate character of the revealed premisses, we feel at once that reason has overstepped the limits of its lawful territory and has given place to rationalism. Analogy is not necessarily mere metaphor; but it is as insecure a basis of argumentation. What we have called the "dogmatizing" spirit is a product of this rationalism. Its assurance is not really begotten of an obedient will, holding fast to God in spite of mental difficulties; but rather, of the absence of all sense of difficulty; of shallow clearness of vision to which everything is obvious and common-sense, and every doubt an evidence either of stupidity or of bad faith.

Dialectical minds are much more concerned about the correctness of sequences and inferences than about the truth of the premisses from which

they are drawn or of the conclusions to which they lead. Like combative people, who care little which side they are on, so long as the battle is well fought and the rules of the game observed, it is the process that delights them and not the result. What they are defending ultimately is, for them, a mere bundle of words, a formula accepted on hearsay, and no more. They have never translated these words into realities, or tried to build their thought upon things; and since their words and conceptions are but the ghosts, outlines, and shadows of concrete things whose reality is simply inexhaustible by our thought, to these word-weavers nothing is incomprehensible or mysterious; everything is as clear as "twice two is four"—and as barren. With such minds the desire to secure a dialectical victory over any comer, might at first sight be mistaken for a zeal for the truth, but it does not need much discernment to perceive that such zeal is similar in character to the excitement about a game whose results are confessedly not of the slightest consequence to the player.

But the mind to which faith is congenial is one which has a profound distrust of unreality and formalism; which translates phrases into things, which is not content that the words should be true for this man or for that, but asks: "Are they true for me? Have I found it so?" Dealing habitually with the inexhaustible complexity of the concrete, and not with abstractions, which are simple only because they are barren forms created by the mind itself, it is familiar with the infinite difficulty and

mystery of things; it is deeply conscious of its own limitation and infirmities, and willing to bear with the infirmities of other minds. Hence it is "swift to hear and slow to speak," swift to gather in evidence, and slow to decide; its spirit is therefore the very antithesis of the dogmatic rationalistic spirit.

Now, just as this rationalistic tendency, though it is adverse to faith, may, and often does co-exist with faith; so the "mystical" tendency—as we may call it for want of a better name—though favourable to faith often co-exists with true agnosticism—never of course with the pseudo-agnosticism which is only a disguised dogmatism. Up to a certain point faith and doubt traverse the same path undistinguished, and then they separate at its bifurcation and take on, each its own distinctive characteristic. In other words, they have a common element in that deep sense of the insufficiency of the human mind to grasp and hold firmly the ultimate and vital truths of eternity. Sometimes this intellectual diffidence is due to the natural calibre of a mind that is large and comprehensive, and so apprehends its own ignorance instinctively; oftener it is developed, if not wholly created, by prolonged and futile effort to attain the unattainable, to comprehend the incomprehensible; so that the agnostic is but the chastened and repentant rationalist in whom the fever has worked its own cure—and these are the agnostics whose agnosticism is the most incurable, partly, because they often retain a secret vein of positiveness in their very agnosticism, partly, because two mental

revolutions in a life-time can hardly be expected in ordinary cases. "Except I see, I will not believe" often continues to be their attitude of mind, even after they have convinced themselves of the impossibility of seeing; they resent the darkness in which ultimate truths are shrouded, as indicating a radical crookedness in the nature of things that justifies an intellectual pessimism and despair.

The cure for this disease is not to be sought in a return to the narrowness of rationalism, in an endeavour to minimize difficulties and explain them away or to deny the essential infirmities of the human mind; nor yet in a forced and insincere act of blind faith, as it were, burying one's head under the clothes so as not to see the spectres by one's bedside; such pseudo-faith were but intellectual cowardice and suicide. Rather it is to be sought in a more consistent, a deeper and truer agnosticism, like that of which Christ speaks, saying: "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto the little ones;" and again: "Unless ye be converted and become as little children ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Doubtless this is what the egoistic dogmatizer is always dinning into our ears, quoting Scripture for his own purpose; "intellectual pride" and "secret immorality" are his two explanations of any opinions other than his own; but he does not notice the difference between the merely negative simplicity and docility of the child; and, the reflex and positive simplicity to which a man is gradually converted by wisdom acting on experience. We are

not to become children, but *as* children;—like, but not the same.

Of the difficulties which faith encounters, some are more obviously superficial and appeal only to the professedly rationalistic mind. We mean difficulties in the very effort to rationalize mysteries and bring them within human comprehension, or at least to harmonize them with particular systems of philosophy. Such difficulties are more often suggested, than answered by the very exponents and defenders of faith, in their laudable endeavour to make things easy and agreeable to common-sense. What is tendered as an indulgence comes to be claimed as a right; and if the metaphysical explanations of the Trinity in Unity, or of the Hypostatic Union, or of the Real Presence seem to break down, the very reasonableness of faith is considered to be thereby destroyed. With such we are not concerned; but rather with the secret unconscious rationalism of many a professed agnostic, which makes him regard the very existence of mysteries as a grievance; and it is in the purging out of this last narrowness that the soul is immediately prepared for reflex or intelligent faith.

For indeed, it is a narrowness—a sort of intellectual "provincialism" that makes us fail to realize how necessarily impossible it is for any part to comprehend that Whole of which it is a part. Were our eye or our ear gifted with independent personality and intelligence it would assuredly conceive the whole body as an eye or ear of some super-excellent kind, and would pass judgment on

its action accordingly; unless indeed it knew of its own necessary infirmity, in which case no difficulty would be very surprising. To the chicken the hen-coop would be a great egg-shell, and the world a great hen-coop; and to man the universe is an infinite earth governed by an infinite man—the only difference being that man can and ought to know his own nescience. Nothing but the whole can be really like the whole, except where we are dealing with a mere quantitative homogeneous totality, such as the ocean whose every part is a little ocean. Yet we go on criticizing the work of God on the supposition that the universe is a machine, or an organism, or a kingdom or something which we can comprehend—only on an indefinitely large scale; it is not its nature, we think, that baffles us, only its bigness. As long as we argue from images and metaphors, our predictions and anticipations must be hopelessly disappointed and set at nought; and yet beyond images and metaphors we cannot possibly go. It is only when this very obvious consideration has penetrated from our thought into our imagination, that we begin to realize, as well as to assent to, the truth that as the heavens are above the earth so are God's ways above our ways and His thoughts above our thoughts; that nothing is so unreasonable as to expect God's ways to seem always kind or reasonable to us; that a plain and comprehensible revelation or philosophy is antecedently condemned as absurd, on the very score of its plainness; and is thereby convicted as being of human authorship.

This "*quia absurdum*" is of course no reason for

believing absurd theories about the Whole, which minds, as limited as our own, would fain impose upon us as divine revelations; though it is sometimes invoked in behalf of such impostures. Yet a true revelation of what is necessarily to us incomprehensible, will assuredly prove bewildering and full of inextricable difficulties. *Credo quia absurdum* is perhaps a paradox; but a religion without difficulties stands self-condemned as incredible.

VII.

VERBAL UNBELIEF AND REAL.

The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God.—Ps. xiv. 9.

In ancient thought wickedness was but folly or unwisdom in moral and practical matters, even as virtue was but light and understanding—hence "the fool" was the wicked man. No doubt the voluntary character of this self-caused folly was implied, though not emphasized; just as with us the moral untruth involved in every sin escapes the attention that is concentrated on the obliquity of will. Speculatively in his intellect the wicked man may be a theist; but in his heart and affections and practice he is an atheist. The devils believe and tremble, *i.e.*, they would rather not believe; they would rather there were no God, no justice, no goodness; whereas faith implies a love of what is believed, a gladness that it is true. Similarly a man, through some accidental confusion of mind, may be speculatively an unbeliever, and yet wish

in his heart that Christianity were true; and by his whole life confess his affection for it.

But when we consider how much we fail in self-analysis and self-expression, it is not unlikely that our verbal confessions of theism or atheism may in many cases belie our true mental attitude. As in other matters, we mistake intellectual difficulties and obscurities for denial; and theoretical conviction for real. Yet a chain of the most cogent evidence may fail to destroy any real belief in the value of this life, or to create a real belief in the value of the next. Formal reason is impotent against the spiritual sense, in a case of conflict. Yet we fancy that our beliefs are dictated by the former, and give ourselves out as holding what in our deepest mind we do not hold. Nearly all the utterances of formal reason are ultimately hypothetical, and never absolute—based on assumptions that are not "real" for us; and on data that are but partial—on the merest fragment of our total experience. Hence if by "the heart" we understand the deeper subconscious reasoning of the spiritual sense, it is not he who says with his lips "there is no God" who is necessarily the fool; but he who says it in his heart. These heart-beliefs are for the most part unknown to us, although our whole life of action and affection is controlled by them.

Besides those who do not want to believe, or who even want not to believe; there is a large class of those who really want to believe, and yet are hindered through difficulties and confusions of the intellect; to whom the truth has not really been

presented; and to confound those two classes indiscriminately under the title of "agnostics" or "unbelievers" is a source of much harm. Among this latter class are to be found sometimes Catholics or Christians, who, without any fault of their own, are troubled in mind concerning the creed to which they still hold on firmly by their will; sometimes non-Christians who, like the Apostles after the Resurrection, are *non credentes præ gaudio*, incredulous because it all seems too good to be true; who are so sensitively loyal to the truth that they shrink from what might be fatuous self-deception, a self-indulgent slumber in a fool's paradise, a deliberate refusal to face the horrible realities of a godless chaos. It is practically impossible to doubt that those who are in love with what they suppose to be only a dream, would not gladly admit it to be a reality; that those who worship God's image wherever it is found in truth, purity, justice, and holiness —would not worship the substance that casts these shadows. If I admire a man's works, and hold his opinions, and sympathize with his tastes, is it likely that I should be reluctant to meet him, or anxious to regard his existence as a myth? We must then carefully separate these two classes of *non credentes præ gaudio;* and *non credentes præ timore;* of reluctant and of willing unbelievers.

It is an accepted conclusion of certain theological schools that no man of normally developed intelligence can be inculpably ignorant of the existence of God the Rewarder of them that seek Him; but when carefully examined this conclusion is not so

severe as it sounds. For we must not be too quick to judge men by their formulated beliefs; and often one who *says* he does not believe in God, only repudiates a belief in some conception of God that his reason tells him is untrue or impossible; and he would only need a skilful Socrates to show him that a belief in God is knit into the very texture of his thought and life. Men express their beliefs more spontaneously and truly in their conduct than in their attempted analyses and formulæ; and a man who puts truth, and honour, and goodness before every other claim; who at least theoretically, admits that death is preferable to sacrifice of principle, who therefore *subjects* himself to righteousness and does not seek it for his own spiritual self-satisfaction or any less worthy motive, but regards it as the absolute and sovereign ruler of life—such a man, could he disentangle his ideas would, doubtless, find himself governed ultimately by a de-humanized but essentially sufficient idea of God. After all, this "humanization" of our notion of God is confessedly a blemish and not a perfection in our mode of conceiving; and it is just this very element of the conception which often puzzles such men out of their faith. It is a needful, unavoidable alloy, but it should not be forced on men's acceptance as pure gold, but practically estimated for what it is.

VIII.

FAITH AND ACTION.

This do and thou shalt live. . . . Go thou and do likewise.—Luke x. 28, 37.

There are three sorts of inquirers after religious truth: those whose anxiety is simply pretence; who are convinced that they already know, and only want to find out if we know, to test our orthodoxy, to tangle us in our statements, to refute us and perhaps betray us.

Secondly: those who inquire out of intellectual curiosity; dealers in views and theories; lovers of the subtleties of controversy.

Thirdly, those whose sole aim is eternal life, who care for the truth only for the sake of the life.

This canon-lawyer who stood up to test Christ was of the first sort; he did not want to practise eternal life but to know the theory of it. By assiduously applying logic to the letter of the Mosaic law, he had lost all sense of its spirit, as one who should cut up and examine each part of the human frame and thus fail to find the quickening principle of its growth and vitality and to appreciate the significance of its harmonious unity. Well-grounded in all the rabbinical controversies of the day, he had the zeal of the professional controversialist which is ostensibly for truth, but really for his own school or clique; and which therefore shows itself in a fierce intolerance of any contradiction. Christ deals prudently with the mischief-

maker; forces him to answer himself from his own text-book; commits Himself to no disputed view of the "neighbour" controversy; and yet lets the truth appear in a self-evident and utterly unassailable form. He bids the inquirer to go and live the truth if he would know more about it. Eternal life is not a theory; it is as much an art as swimming; and the theory follows and depends on the practice; not the practice on the theory. Christ is not merely a truth to be believed, but a way to be trodden, a life to be lived. We get to know Christ as fellow-travellers, fellow-workers, fellow-soldiers, get to know one another,—by mingling their lives together.

IX.

UNWILLING BELIEF.

Thou believest there is but one God. Thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble.—Jas. ii. 19.

A belief in God may be forced upon an unwilling mind by irresistible evidence or by testimony past suspicion. This is not faith, because it is an involuntary assent, not motived by that "devout wish to believe" of which theologians speak. This wish to believe, this rejoicing in the truth, may exist where evidence of the same truth leaves no room for faith. For faith is "the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things that appear not." Wherefore faith supposes, first, that the truth is not mathematically cogent, albeit one which may and certainly ought to be accepted; and

secondly, that it is a welcome truth which one would prefer to believe rather than doubt. Hence there is a certain incipient love of God involved in the most imperfect faith; a certain conditional and qualified (but not necessarily supreme and absolute) appreciation of the Divine excellence. Without this the belief is like that of the devils, not merely imperfect but quite dead and involuntary. Nor is this the case only when evidence forces the truth on a reluctant mind (as may conceivably happen), but also when the belief is held by mere force of education, fashion, tradition, without any sort of sympathy or even with a certain repugnance kept in check by mere superstition. The fear of God based on such unwilling belief is (like the devils' trembling) abjectly servile. Men who in their hearts wish there were no God, no morality, no hereafter, and who are held back simply by a calculation of consequences, have no true faith, no saving fear, but only a prudential cowardice. But between this and filial fear—the companion of perfect love—there is a fear based upon a willing faith, and companion to a love that is as yet weak and qualified and in need of the support of self-regarding motives.

X.

INTERNAL TRUTHFULNESS.

Who speaketh the truth *in his heart*.—Ps. xiv. 3.

There are many who would cheerfully die rather than say with their lips what they knew to be false; and who nevertheless are untruthful in the worst

sense of the word ; *i.e.*, they do not speak the truth in their own heart, in that solitary converse of the soul with herself. For our mind is not merely passive in the apprehension of truth, as it were a mirror faithfully reflecting, by a sort of mechanical necessity, every ray of evidence that falls upon its burnished surface. On the contrary, it sorts and interprets such evidence, and out of materials thence selected builds up its own presentment of the object; and as in verbal utterance it gives substance to that presentment and sets it before the hearer, so, previously, by a certain spiritual utterance or internal word it speaks to itself and constructs an idea of reality, that is either true or false. And though it is often false through defect of evidence (*i.e.*, of the material out of which it is constituted), or through lack of skill in interpreting evidence, yet, no less often, the perversion is wilful owing to a want of internal truthfulness; of a genuine love of reality and light; of a genuine hatred of pretence and unreality. All that is known as bias and prejudice, all distortion of the judgment through "inordinate affections," through a desire not to see unpleasant, disturbing, mortifying truths that would entail troublesome and painful alterations in our thought and conduct; all such blinking of disagreeable facts and stifling of unwelcome suggestions, are indications of mental untruthfulness. If, as often happens, verbal veracity coexists with this interior insincerity, it cannot have its root in a love of truth and reality for its own sake, but in deference to social sanctions and standards, or in a sense

of justice, or in some other motive, good or bad, that is not the proper motive of veracity as such —namely, a hatred of sham and pretence, and a love of truth and reality.

In this stricter sense truthfulness is the most distinctively human virtue, perfecting that faculty and tendency which is distinctive of man as such. Passions, affections, emotions, have their shadows and analogies in the higher animals, but to live for reality and to rest therein belongs only to the rational creature. But among men there is a vast majority of "formalists;" that is, of those who seem to care little or nothing about reality; or who, if they dispute and reason and prove, it is in defence, not of reality, not of what they have touched by personal experience, but of some shadow or picture of reality which they have borrowed from others, some formula or bundle of words which they have never attempted to translate into reality, so as to determine its true value. Their mind deals with counters and not with coin. Wonderful are the feats of arithmetical jugglery they will perform with these counters, but their highest results are "words, words, words." We *feel* that they have never once touched reality, or tried honestly to speak the truth in their hearts.

Yet the most truth-loving mind must be content to depend largely on untranslated formulæ, on beliefs taken on faith, or acquired by tradition and education. Our life is too short, our light too dim, our experience too narrow, our energy too limited, to allow us to verify personally more than a slight

portion of our beliefs. But while the formalist feels no need of such verification, so long as he is superficially or exteriorly consistent with his assumptions, the truth-lover is ever conscious of the difference between what he merely believes, and what he has actually thought and experienced.

The only conceivable, though quite inadmissible, argument in favour of untruthfulness in speech would be that, those who regard a verbal lie as a moral impossibility may be tempted to warp their mind into agreement with what is most convenient to say. They will never say what they do not believe; but they will be fain to believe what they want to be able to say truthfully. Thus mental truthfulness will be sacrificed to verbal. Of the two, the mental lie is worse, both for the individual, and in the long run, for society.

XI.

THE ASSIMILATION OF DOCTRINE.

Take this scroll and eat it.—Ezechiel iii. 1.

The mere swallowing of food is not enough unless it be assimilated and digested; yet it is a necessary condition of digestion. So with our beliefs; we swallow them wholesale by an act of extrinsic faith based on the word of others; and such faith is like the prop that supports a plant till it strikes root downwards and becomes self-supporting. They are not ours fully save in the measure that we have worked them into the fabric of our life and thought. Thus the collective

mind, the corporate experience and reflection of the society into which we are born, does not live in us fully except so far as it has ceased to be an external rule of faith and has reproduced itself in our own mind and drawn it into living and active conformity with itself. So too with Divine revelation whose mysteries are obscure, not because God wants to hide truth from us, but because we are not educated sufficiently, either mentally or morally, to apprehend them aright. Its purpose is to enlighten us, not to puzzle us; to improve our mind, not to stultify it. Our intelligence should, so to say, eat its way gradually into the meaning of what at first we hold to merely by obedient assent. Yet there is ever a Beyond of mystery; for the more we know, the more we wonder. It needs understanding to understand the extent of our ignorance. It is precisely as being beyond us that revelation provokes the growth of our mind. We strain upwards and find the outlook ever widening around us; and from each question answered, a new brood of doubt is born.

> Nasce per quello a guisa di rampollo
> A pie del ver il dubbio; ed è natura,
> Che al summo pinge noi di collo in collo.[1]

Let us not then imagine that we have finished our duty by swallowing revelation wholesale in submission to external authority; we swallow that

[1] Hence from the root of every truth shoot up
New questionings; and thus from ridge to ridge
Our nature spurs us till we scale the height.

we may digest, and we digest that we may live the eternal life of the mind and heart by an intelligent sympathy with the mind and heart of God.

XII.

DIFFERENCES OF APPREHENSION.

To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; but to them that are without, all these things are done in parables. —Mark iv. 11.

Nothing could be more offensive to the democratic temper of this age than the distinction between esoteric and exoteric religion—than the notion of mysteries kept apart from the *profanum vulgus* by a priestly caste; of things too holy to be given to the dogs, too frailly precious to be cast before swine. Indeed it may be said that "popularity" was, and is, the distinctive note of Christ's religion in which it differs from the ancient and especially the Oriental cults: "Go and tell John, . . . to the poor the Gospel is preached," not to the "wise and prudent." "In secret," says Christ to His accusers, "I have spoken nothing." So prevalent however was the notion of a *disciplina arcani* in all religions of the time; so great the need of a certain secrecy in the face of persecution, slander, and calumny; so natural the temptation of any priesthood to lay claim to a special gnosis, that we find everywhere in the Church the strangest results of the conflict of the two principles. Those who may not touch the sacred vessels in which the Sacrament lies, may not only touch, but taste and feed on the Sacrament itself; they may not enter the sanctuary

because of the presence of That whose *raison d'être* is to enter into them. And this is symbolic of an all-pervading anomaly.

But though it is the desire of Christ to bring every man to the fullest possible knowledge of the truth; though He does not make mysteries wantonly or hold back certain truths for a more privileged class of "initiated;" yet in the very nature of things the same seed will evoke a different yield from different soil. The range of capacity, of intelligence, education, and spiritual sympathy, is almost limitless among the adherents of a world-wide religion, embracing all classes of society, and reaching over many centuries of human experience. To speak to each man, each class, each people, each age, in its own language, on its own presuppositions—scientific, historical, philosophical, nay, even religious—so far from being contrary to, is altogether consonant with, the democratic spirit of the Gospel. The truth spoken is the same, and the whole endeavour of accommodation is inspired by the wish to speak it as fully as the hearer can hear it.

If indeed our language, when applied to things spiritual and eternal were, not an analogy, but an equation, as when we speak of things bodily and measurable, then an alteration of the expression would be an alteration of the truth. But with likenesses and similitudes it is not so. What is like, is also unlike, and like something else quite different. And thus the representation of the same eternal realities, in one mind and another, may be almost infinitely different; so that they seem like two

distinct creeds, whereas they are both presentments of one and the same. In this sense there must always and necessarily be a fuller and a less full understanding of revealed truths; not indeed a hard and fast line of demarcation between esoteric and exoteric Christianity, between the mind of the priesthood and of the laity; between the initiated and the uninitiated; but such a division as exists in every department of knowledge and in every art and skill, between the upper and lower portions of a continuous scale of intelligence. If a different apprehension of the same truths makes a different religion, then it is not one Christianity for the cultivated, another for the rude and ignorant, but as many Christianities as there are Christians. And this explains the apparent inconsistency of Christ's words: "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to others in parables" —a difference not in doctrine, but in mode of proposition.

XIII.

THE LANGUAGE OF REVELATION.

I will make you fishers of men.—Matt. iv. 19.

See how God speaks to every soul, to every class, in its own language, moulding the truth according to the governing categories and forms of the mind in question. For a merchant, or a builder, or a farmer understands truths most easily when they are translated into the familiar terms of his own occupation; nor will he thus be led astray so

long as he does not confound illustrations with exact measurements.

Here God presents Himself as the great Fisher of Souls, imparting His piscatorial, as elsewhere His pastoral, office to His Apostles. He fishes for souls with nets and hooks and baits and loving snares, let down from the invisible and spiritual world into this visible and empirical life of ours, with regard to which He is "truly a Hidden God," as little capable in His own Divine nature of mingling with our visible life as the fisher on the river-bank with the fish-life of the stream. When we wonder at His silence, at His invisibility, His inaction, we are as gold-fish in a tank wondering why they never find him who feeds and cares for them, swimming about like themselves. He holds some blind dumb-show communication with them from the outer world, by touches, perhaps, and signs not without meaning, just as God touches us from the other world and drives us in this direction or that for purposes which we may conjecture rightly or wrongly;—it matters little which—so long as He gets His way.

It might seem perhaps that this principle of accommodation is not consistent with the unity and immutability of Divine truth; but this is to forget that our language can never be treated as an equation when we are expressing concrete realities and not merely abstract forms and figures; still less when it is applied to other-world realities which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived. Christ's task as Revealer is comparable. without

any exaggeration, to that of one who should endeavour to reveal the visible world of form and colour to a race void of the sense of sight and of all language derived from or appealing to that sense. Such an one would have to adapt the language of the other senses to the almost impossible purpose of building up some rough analogy of the world of light. And then in how many quite different ways might not the same truth be said! And what folly would result from the application of logic to statements so entirely analogous; what solemn nonsense might not be gravely deduced by the rabbinical mind!

The progress of revelation from first to last is the result of the continual striving of God's Spirit in and with the spirit of man, whereby the material furnished by the workings of the human mind in its endeavour to cope with heavenly truths is continually refined and corrected through Divine inspiration into closer conformity with spiritual realities. There is no material so poor and gross but God can weave of it a clinging web delicate enough to reveal this or that neglected detail of Truth's contour. Thus did He, patiently and through the course of ages, first, through Moses; then, through the prophets; lastly, through Christ, refine upon the grosser and more barbaric conceptions of sacrifice, till the mustard-seed of truth, hidden in those first clumsy efforts of the religious spirit, found its full development in the sacrifice of a sinless humanity in the fire of Charity. In all cases if the language, legend, or ritual be human, the Spirit that purifies and enriches

its significance is divine; and like every other process, this too is to be interpreted by the direction it makes for, rather than by the stage already attained. The cramped symbolism of human expression admits perhaps of little expansion; but there is no limit to the wealth of meaning that inspiration can crowd into those narrow moulds. He whose Immensity did "not shrink from the Virgin's womb" does not disdain to confine His eternal truth in the swaddling-clothes of those childish legends and categories whereby the finite mind strives to compass the infinite, but gives Himself willingly into the feeble hands that are stretched out to receive Him.

XIV.

THE STAR.

We have seen His star in the East.—Matt. ii. 2.

These Magi were astrologers. They believed that each man had his lucky star; that his fate was determined by the planetary conjunction under which he was born. As science and learning went in those days, they were learned and scientific men; though we laugh at their science, as those who come after us will laugh at ours. Yet God accommodates His revelation to their scientific superstitions, and leads them by astrology to Christ. As He takes the lifeless dust and breathes into it the breath of life, so He takes our worthless errors and superstitions and weaves them into a language for the expression of eternal truths.

As it is His creative prerogative to bring good out of, and through, permitted evil; so it is His glory and triumph to bring light and truth out of darkness and error.

The supernatural order does not necessarily interrupt the established course of nature, or hasten the slow growth of human knowledge and understanding in matters within the compass of our natural faculties. Christ does not speak to us in the terms of the final science or philosophy—if such be conceivable—but in the terms of that which He finds to hand; for all alike are more or less inadequate to the perfect expression of Divine mysteries. To the Jews He is a Jew: a Samaritan to the Samaritans, and a Magus to the Magi. No error, or superstition can hinder God's ingress into the soul that He chooses to enter; no tongue or language is so feeble, coarse, or imperfect but He can use it to utter the words of eternal life. And this should make us less anxious and despairing in the face of so much darkness that is merely intellectual; for no fault of the mind can ever hinder that goodness of will which may co-exist with the lowest degree of ethical and religious enlightenment, even as it may be wanting to the highest. For natural knowledge, God leaves us to the provisions of nature; He does not help us to our hurt, or spare us any profitable labour or exertion which is essential to our dignity as self-forming, self-determining personalities. And this is true of the race as of the unit. Mankind is self-forming, no less than man. Only in regard to the things that belong to our eternal peace and

where we cannot possibly help ourselves, does He come to our aid supernaturally. He did not send His Son to teach us astronomy or chemistry; but suffered us to struggle to the light through the superstitions of astrology and alchemy.

Nor can it be supposed that the religious speculations of these Magi were much more successful than their scientific endeavours. Even if they were monotheists, which is very questionable, they were in outer darkness in respect to Jewish orthodoxy. Yet seated in darkness, they beheld a great light, because they had eyes to see: whereas Herod, and the priests, and the teachers of Jewry sat in the light and saw nothing, because their eyes were sealed. For a pure heart is the eye of the soul. Not with the brain or the mind alone do we see God: but with the whole spirit. "If thine eye be single" is the condition of light; that is, if we seek Him with our *whole* heart we shall surely find Him. But this means first to *want* Him with our whole heart, for we seek just in the measure that we want. Herod did not want a King; nor the priests, a Priest; nor the teachers, a Teacher: all were filled with the lust of dominating over men's bodies, or their wills, or their reason; tyrants of the purse; tyrants of the conscience; tyrants of the mind. How could such want the great Deliverer of the oppressed? How could they seek Him with their whole hearts except to destroy Him?

But these men from afar—distant not only locally, but mentally and educationally — were hungering and thirsting after truth and justice,

longing for some vaguely conceived Divine Teacher and Ruler, some Deliverer of the nations—Prophet, Priest, and King—to whom they might offer their myrrh and frankincense and gold. And God heard the dumb prayer of their heart, formulated though it may have been in the language of error or superstition; and spoke to them in the language they knew and sent the Star to show "where Hope was born." He did not speak this language to those who had Moses and the Prophets; these needed no sign nor wonder, but had only to clear the mists of worldliness and self-complacency from their own eyes. Orthodox to the point of pedantry, they counted the books and chapters, the letters, jots and tittles of the law; but of its sense and spirit they knew nothing.

Self-blinded, they sat in the midst of light and beheld only darkness.

XV.

OUR APPREHENSION OF THE SPIRITUAL.

For we wrestle not with flesh and blood.—Eph. vi. 12.

The woman who came behind Christ that she might not be seen, and touched the hem of His garment, believed undoubtedly that some healing physical influence would pass into her from His body, and that He wrought His cures more as a chemical than as a free and conscious agency. But she also believed that He possessed this healing power because He was the beloved Son of God. Her view as to the *mode* of operation—

which is the view of many of those who have recourse to relics—was scientifically superstitious. But her faith in Christ was not superstitious. He had not come to teach us the *modus operandi* either of medicine or of miracle; and far from correcting her error on so irrelevant a matter or giving her the true rationale of the seeming wonder, He accommodates Himself to her mind and language. "Who touched Me?"—as though He did not know; "I perceive virtue has gone out from Me"—as though it could be drawn from Him without His knowledge and will. And elsewhere the Evangelist adopts the same standpoint when he says: "Virtue went forth from Him and healed them all"—as it were, by an involuntary radiation. And thus throughout, Christ clothes the ineffable truth of eternity in such poor ragged materials as He finds to hand; He adopts the language, the mental forms and categories, the science, the philosophy, the ethics, the history, the religious tradition and ritual of those to whom He addresses Himself, and in the terms of these things He speaks of what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived. Had He first, as a necessary preliminary, tried to rectify their conceptions in all these matters, to give them the final scientific truth towards which human effort is ever pressing, He would have bewildered them to no purpose; for, the language of even the highest culture would not, absolutely speaking, have been appreciably more adequate to divine realities, while, relatively to ruder minds, it would have been less adequate.

Thus, in regard to what may be called "pneumatology," or the doctrine of souls and spirits, of angels and devils, Christ seems scarcely to have modified that which He found to hand, but to have used it for the shadowing forth of facts whose adequate nature is, to us, inscrutable. He accommodates Himself to our picturing of the soul or spirit as a filmy, aerial, perhaps diminutive, replica of the human form; as something but slightly released from the conditions of matter—from the bonds of time and space; as flitting hither and thither, entering or leaving the body, as it were a house; He speaks of the devil and his angels, or of St. Michael and his hosts, as it might be of an earthly army marching out to do battle. And in accepting this presentment of the facts and accommodating our lives to it; in praying to our guardian angel; in watching against the snares of the devil; in treating it as adequate while we know it is not adequate, we shall be more in harmony with the truth than were we either to trust any conjectures of our own in such an unknowable region, or to treat so imperfect an account of facts as practically worthless.

Doubtless the grotesque and superstitious demonology of the middle ages is responsible for the comparative suppression and neglect of what, after all, is an integral factor of the supernatural order as represented in the Christian revelation. That primitive expression of the eternal truth, clothed in the language used by Christ and His Apostles, is the germ out of which all subsequent develop-

ment has grown, and by which it must be criticized. In that expression, as in any analogy or similitude, we must of course distinguish between the abstract or "dictionary" sense of the words, and the sense of the speaker; for in using a public language we say both more and less than we mean. When Christ says that the mustard-seed is the least of all seeds, He uses a common belief to express another truth, but He does not make that belief His own. Were some smaller seed alleged, it would be foolish to quote Christ's authority against the allegation. When He says: "I perceive virtue is gone out of Me," He used, but He does not accept or sanction, the materialism implied in the statement. Such a conception of veracity would make speech impossible; we might not say that a man "breathes forth his soul into the hands of his Creator."

On this score some might think that the demonology implied in Christ's language was but incidental to the mode of expression, but no part of the substance of His revelation. Yet closer examination rejects this suggestion, and although we may fully allow the analogical character of what is said about the devil and his angels, it is impossible to deny that mysterious facts are thereby conveyed to us which form an integral part of the supernatural order; and that therefore no development of Christianity which prescinds from that part of Christ's teaching can be full and coherent. St. Paul's utterance on the subject is as dogmatic and precise as possible, where he says that our wrestling is not only against flesh and blood, not only against temptations

coming from the frailty of our nature, or from the secret influence or direct violence of the world; but also against wicked spirits who are the rulers of the world; and a glance at a concordance will show how the belief is woven in and out of his teaching from first to last. And so we find it in St. Peter and in the four Gospels, and back to the very beginning of the Old Testament; the part played by these super- or infra-human spiritual agencies in the drama of man's history as presented to us in the Judæo-Christian religion is not incidental but essential. To strike it out, is not to develope, but to reconstruct the whole conception.

Yet there is no point of his belief concerning which the modern-minded Christian is more silent or shy—one might almost say, ashamed. It seems to make him responsible for all the freakishness of mediæval demonology; and to connect him by descent, lineally, or collaterally, with some of the lower or lowest forms of pagan religion. Certainly, the amount of superstition, sometimes only silly, often dangerous and malignant, that clustered round and obscured the authorized Christian doctrine in former days, may well excuse this shyness. As a whole, the system of demonology had become so preposterous, that by the mere growth of intelligence it was left behind and ignored, nor was any effort made to unravel so seemingly hopeless a tangle. While the pictorial art of those times shows us that there was always a sense that our human picturings of God and His angels were unworthy and needed etherealizing; there was no

such conscience in respect to evil spirits, for whom the unspoilt human frame was all too good. It was almost a point of religion and piety to materialize them in every way; to depict them as animal monstrosities. This symbolism was rightly understood by the cultivated; but there was no motive, no effort, to check the literalism of the millions.

Further, in a pre-scientific age the devil was necessarily made the residuary legatee of any seemingly supernatural marvel that could not conveniently be ascribed to divine intervention. Even in some dark corners, this line of argument survives with regard to hypnotic and allied phenomena: "They are not yet fully explicable, therefore they are supernatural; they cannot be from God, therefore they must be from the devil." A better knowledge of physical nature, of the workings of our own mind and body and nervous system; of the true causes of insanity, diseases, epidemics; a better understanding of our spiritual dependence on others, past and present, has exonerated the devil from so much of the burden of mischief formerly laid upon him, that it is an easy inference to suppose that in the course of time there will be nothing left for him to bear, and that "we shall have no need of such an hypothesis."

If, however, we look to the Scriptural presentment of the devil, we shall find some reason to arrest this precipitation. For there we observe, on the whole, a surprising unity of conception, and none of that incoherent freakishness which characterizes

the demonology of those crude religions, from which the symbolism may have been partly adopted or derived, or with which it may have some common source. From first to last, the spirits of evil figure as the rulers of the darkness of this world, as the enemies of the light of knowledge and wisdom; as working upon the mind through fallacies, deceits, and subtleties; as following invariably serpentine tactics, noiseless, accommodating, insinuating. If we penetrate beneath the letter, it is impossible not to be struck with the perfect unity of spirit between the temptation of Eve in Paradise and that of Christ in the desert; in each case an attempt to blind the higher reason through an appeal to lower inclination; to obscure the wider-reaching view in favour of the narrower and more partial; and always with a show of greater reasonableness and rightness—the Prince of darkness transforming himself into an angel of light. And then, as Christ meets his suggestions, not by argument but by an appeal to authority—to what is written—so St. Paul tells us to use the shield of faith against the fiery darts of doubt; and St. Peter urges the need of sobriety and vigilance—of the interior quiet and absence of excitement and confusion which are the conditions of spiritual clear-sightedness, if, strong in the faith, we would resist our adversary. For faith is a voluntary holding to truths that were accepted by us in the hour of peace, but which are now obscured in the darkness of passion and temptation. On this showing, the peculiar influence of the rulers of darkness is exerted upon the mind, in favour of doubt, scepticism,

credulity, superstition, ignorance; and against intelligence, reason, and faith.

They tempt us by way of direct suggestion; or, indirectly, in so far as the nature and trend of our thoughts is for the most part governed by the state of our feelings and sentiments. If this be, so to say, the special department of temptation authoritatively assigned to the devil, it cannot be said that the, at least partially, diabolic origin of such phenomena is either less or more evident than formerly, or has been sensibly affected by advances in knowledge. They lie in far too obscure a region and are too infinitely complex in their conditions. So far, however, as natural observation seems to favour the Christian belief, it is when we look to the results of comparative demonology in the widest sense. Here those who are not biassed by some "naturalistic" presupposition, will be the first to admit that the existence and intervention of super-human or infra-human intelligence, is, of all hypotheses so far suggested, the simplest, and that which harmonizes the greatest number of facts.

To say that the Christian belief has difficulties, is to say that it embodies facts relatively mysterious belonging to an order of being other than our own; and also, that we have to express such facts in terms of those with which we are familiar. Yet some of these difficulties are commonplace enough. The permitted existence of creatures hostile to God and His servants is not a greater mystery in the case of devils than in that of evil men. The seeming un-

fairness and inequality of the conflict between the hidden and all-crafty tempter, and poor, passionate, leaden-witted man may be met by the general doctrine of God's Providence in adjusting the strain of temptation to our strength and profit. The precise mode of diabolic suggestion is unimaginable enough, and yet we are confronted with too many problems connected with thought-transference and hypnotic control to say that there is no access from mind to mind, save through the road of the senses; or that there may not be a dynamic connection or sympathy between every spirit, as there is between every particle of matter in the universe. There are cases, not perhaps wholly imaginary, of personalities whose silent presence is a felt influence for good or for evil—for peace or for a strange disquiet.

That a spaceless, timeless, supersensible order of being cannot possibly be realized by our sense-bounded intelligence goes without saying; but that it should therefore be regarded as impossible or even as improbable, is simply an instance of the narrowness, the "incurable provincialism" of the human mind—part of that same racial egotism which made the belief in geocentricism die so hard; and which still makes us seek some central sun within the range of our telescopes as the pivot of the physical universe. When we think how one born blind lives in the midst of a world of colour and form to which he is dead; and when we cast up the probability of our few senses exhausting any appreciable fraction of possible sense-experience we can hardly be less than certain that we live in the midst of countless

interpenetrating worlds to which we are blind, but whose denizens, if such there be, are not necessarily blind to ours.

Thus if we cannot insist too strongly on the merely analogous truth of the language of revelation concerning the devil and his angels, whether he be figured as a serpent, a dragon, a roaring lion, or as the leader of an army of shadows in human form; neither can we, if we hold Christian teaching in its integrity, deny the practical and relative truth, as far as we are concerned, of this presentment of mysterious facts.

To regard the devil as the mere personification of temptation in the abstract, as a more compendious re-concretion of ideas already derived from a scattered multitude of concrete instances, would be but the rationalizing of a poetic fiction. It would be to show that what sounds much, meant little; that what was needlessly difficult was really quite simple. If, however, we affirm the personality of these spirits we must also remember that if personality is an obscure conception applied to ourselves, it is a thousand times more so when applied to an order of being of which we know so little. The truth figured in revelation is not less than it seems, or simpler, but inexpressibly fuller and more difficult. We can only receive so much of it as will go into our deplorably inadequate language. Yet to pray and to act and to guide ourselves by this revealed presentment of it is our plain duty. Faith lies rather in the practical recognition of other-world realities than in the exact mental conception of them. Such

knowledge as we are given of them is directed rather to the guidance of our life and action than to the interests of theory and speculation.

XVI.

MIRACLES.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested forth His glory and His disciples believed in Him.—John ii. 11.

Probably these words were written late enough to be intended as a denial of the silly legends that were rapidly clustering round and obscuring the life of Jesus, and presenting Him to the world as a wonder-working magician, rather than as a teacher sent from God and the hater of all superstition. When we read in the apocryphal gospels how the Holy Child gave life to sparrows moulded in clay and made them fly off to the astonishment of His playmates; or how He cast the dyer's cloth into the fire and then restored it miraculously from its ashes; or how He refuted the ignorance of His schoolmaster and covered him with confusion by a display of precocious and somewhat useless and questionable erudition; or finally, how He punished with instant death the sacrilegious act of a man who accidentally knocked up against Him in the street, we feel at once that, the men who could narrate or believe such things of Christ, of Him who sought not His own glory, who likened Himself to His brethren in all things, who prayed for His murderers and calumniators, must have been already blind and dead to the very first lessons of truth and love. If we may use

words so low, the very charm and spell of Christ's personality lie in His absolute self-suppression; in the fact that He emptied Himself of the glory, the power, the supernal prerogatives which belonged by a certain right—as it were, naturally—to the humanity of God Incarnate; that He took the likeness, not of glorified flesh but of sinful flesh; and in order to be like us, elected to win back through obedience in suffering, what was already His by birthright. Only in behalf of others and for the glory of Him who sent Him, did He ever exercise His miraculous powers. He saved others; Himself He would not save; He would not descend from His Cross, nor call angelic legions to His aid. Only a mind as gross and materialistic as that of Herod could confound His miracles with the magical displays of some self-advertizing conjuror challenging competition.

There were two purposes served by Christ's miracles—the confirmation and the illustration of His teaching. The former is plainly insisted on in the words we have quoted: "He manifested forth His glory and His disciples believed in Him," and He Himself appeals to His miracles more than once as making unbelief inexcusable. Now no wonder-working is of itself an evidence of divine mission. To an untutored savage the effects of the telephone or the phonograph would be relatively as miraculous as many of Christ's miracles would be to us—just as far beyond their realm of observed and established uniformities—their "order of Nature." All attempts to fix limits to Nature's powers are idle and sophistical. Nor does a miracle mean that an effect is produced

without a cause or otherwise than by the concurrence of its necessary conditions. The superiority it implies in the worker is a superiority of knowledge; for knowledge is power; because God is omniscient He is omnipotent; and man works wonders in Nature just in the measure that he understands Nature. If the savant works what is a miracle relatively to the savage's conception of Nature, it does not directly prove to the latter that he is a teacher sent from God or that God is with him; but only that he possesses a wider knowledge than the savage; that he sees Nature from a higher standpoint—not necessarily, from the Absolute standpoint.

Granting that in some sense the raising of the dead or the turning of water to wine, were a supernatural deed beyond the limits of any observed or unobserved uniformity of nature; yet we cannot at once say whether it be from the powers above or the powers below. Some Catholic theologians have thought that the power of creating might belong *instrumentally* to a creature; and the ancient Gnostics held that it could not belong to the First Cause, or indeed to any but an evil principle—so little is it clear to reason that this, the highest conceivable miracle, is necessarily from God; still less, any lower manifestation of power. And even if philosophers and theologians could apply certain subtle criteria to test the supernatural character of the fact, what would this avail those ignorant crowds in whose behalf Christ wrought most of His miracles? Were they competent to say what was or what was not beyond the capacity of unexplored nature; and

even when they rightly judged Christ's miracles to be from God, was it on the strength of sound metaphysical reasoning?

Hence, viewed in itself and apart from circumstances, there is no fact so marvellous as to be evidently beyond the power of created causes. How then were Christ's miracles a seal set upon His work by God? What was their proving value?

They could have had no such value except as wrought by one whose absolute truthfulness and sincerity was already admitted as beyond all question —one manifestly incapable of chicanery or boastful display. It was only with those who thus implicitly trusted Christ as altogether selfless and sincere that His miracles availed as proof. "His *disciples* believed in Him"—those who had conversed with Him intimately, and felt the spell of His sinless and pure personality. The reasons for personal trust are complex to analyze but simple to apprehend; they need no dialectic skill but only a certain spiritual likeness and sympathy; they are often hid from the savants and revealed to babes. But the priests, the scribes, and the lawyers saw the same miracles and believed not; for they interpreted Christ by themselves, as being ambitious, worldly, deceitful, insincere —at least they wished to think so, and ended by succeeding in blinding themselves. They did not know *how* He wrought these miracles, but when He claimed to do so by the power of God they practically said: "How do we know? We have only His word for it. Perhaps it is by Beelzebub, prince of the devils, that He casts out devils! And did not

the magicians of Pharoah work sign for sign against Moses? And has not every false Messias wrought miracles?" Yes, they had *only* His word for it, and no other disproof of wilful deceit was possible. If they lacked that sympathetic insight which discerns the quality of truthfulness in a character, they had no available criterion to distinguish imposture and jugglery from miracle. And so miracles have always appealed in vain to the cynical, the worldly, the untruthful-minded. "If they will not hear Moses and the Prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

But surely, one will say, if such a trust in Christ's truthfulness must already exist before His miracles can have any proving-value for us, of what use is the miracle? Is it not enough that He assure us that He is a teacher sent from God?

It is not enough, just because there is such a thing as *bona fide* illusion, not only in the case of fanatical enthusiasm and over-strung spiritual fervour, but even in the very sanest and most temperate judgments. But more especially is such illusion incident to the prophetic office, as all experts in spiritual discernment are aware. Here, more than anywhere, is the over-taxed brain and exhausted nerve-system likely to falsify the divine message by addition or perversion; and therefore some external proof is needed to show that the prophet really has that access to, and power in, the realms of ultra-natural experience which he honestly and sincerely professes to have.

Thus, though the miracle by itself is never

demonstrably a sign from God, yet it is so, taken in connection with the unimpeachable truthfulness of him who advances it as a sign from God—a sign, not of his own truthfulness, which must be presupposed, but of his immunity from self-illusion.

"But," says St. Gregory, "the miracles of our Lord and Saviour are to be received both as actually credible facts, and also as conveying some significant lesson to us; as exercises of power they teach us one thing, and another in so far as they express some mystic sense." (Hom. 2, in Luc. 18.) They are indeed enacted parables—a mode of utterance proper to Him "by whom all things were made" to tell forth His glory and to be a language between God and the soul which is fashioned to His own image and likeness. The miracles of the apocryphal Gospels, like those with which popular traditions of all times are wont to embellish and obscure the memory of Saints and heroes, lack this feature of mystic and doctrinal significance, but the genuine miracles of Christ are not merely seals, but sacraments and symbols of the truths He came to teach; evidences not of His power alone, nor even of His goodness and beneficence, but also of His wisdom and light. And this, at Cana—the first of the series, strikes the key-note and is singularly rich in mystical sense. It tells us how God brings strength out of weakness, wine out of water, infusing His divinity into our humanity in the economy of the Incarnation; how the extremity of man's misery is the opportunity of God's mercy, and how He suffers things to grow worse that the need may be felt more keenly, that

there may be a deeper desire and capacity, a heartier cry, and a more liberal response. Not till man had learnt his helplessness by long and bitter experience did God send forth His Son in the fulness of time. And He did so in answer to the prayers and intercessions of His Saints who from the beginning were co-operant with Christ in the work of redemption, whose part is symbolized by Mary's whispered reminder: "They have no wine." And if men soon grow weary in well-doing, if their love burns brightly at first, but soon languishes; not so with Him whose love gathers strength like a torrent in its course, who puts forth what is worse in the beginning but keeps the good wine till the end: "Behold," says St. John, "now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" *i.e.*, what we shall be when the wine of the Sacred Chalice shall seem as water in contrast to that which we shall drink with Christ in the Kingdom of God, of which it said: *Calix meus inebrians, quam præclarus est!*" and "Thou hast kept the good wine until now!"

XVII.

FAITH IN CHRIST.

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. —John x. 27.

As to conscience which gives us the revelation of God the Rewarder, the sense of its authority is born in us, and however weakened by habitual deafness and disobedience, is never wholly lost. But faith in Christ and His Church comes to us, in some sense,

from without, and by a process of recognition. "My sheep hear My voice;" those who have accustomed themselves to the tone of conscience will recognize it in the voice of Christ. It is as waking and satisfying the highest, and ever higher, aspirations of our moral nature that Christ proves Himself to be, in some sort, the Human Conscience Incarnate; that is to say: God made man.

Being pre-eminently a practical matter, a religion must be brought to the test of practice and experiment. Life—the highest life of the soul—is the end to which it is directed. The great question therefore is, its bearing upon life. Before we put ourselves into the hand of the physician we must have some reasonable ground for our trust; and this is usually found in the benefit that we ourselves and our friends have experienced from his treatment. His degrees and certificates count for little beside this experimental evidence. A like test is used in the case of political systems. Logically, the British Constitution is absurd and impossible; but it works; the Code Napoléon is admirable on paper, but fails before the test of life.

Christ's recommendation, as a "teacher sent from God," is of the practical kind: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Life —the life of the higher and eternal part of us—is what we are hungering for; the life which is fed in some sense upon words. But there are words and words — empty, and solid grain; there are dead formulæ, learnt by heart and passed on from mouth to mouth, at best the ghosts of truths that once were

alive; and there are living, life-giving words, from His heart who reads the human soul through and through, and so knows each individual's need and remedy; who calls His sheep by their name. And it is only in obedience to such a personal call, addressed to me as to no other, that faith is born in the soul. "No man cometh to Me unless the Father draw him." The words to which we have long listened with dead ears, when spoken by men, suddenly seem lit up with new meaning, invigorated with strange force, and as it were thrust upon our notice, and aimed at our individual case by the special providence of God.

In other words, it is on the irresistible conviction that Christ is the food of our soul, that His words are the words of our Eternal Life—of the life of our heart, and mind—that our faith in Him as our Teacher and Master rests. It may not be a welcome conviction, it may be one we have long resisted; still, as soon as conscience condemns this resistance as wrong, as suicidal in regard to our higher life, we must either obey, or be condemned on the score of bad faith.

As far as even an impersonal, objective argument for Christ and Christianity is concerned, the test of life is chiefest: "No man can do the works which Thou dost except God be with him." It does not need much subtlety to discern Christianity from Christians; and to recognize that whatever amelioration there has ever been in man's moral and social life, whether before Christ or after, has been the work of those principles of which Christianity is the

synthesis and highest expression; and that whatever evil has prevailed, whether among Christians or others, has been due to the neglect of those princi. ples: "He was the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world;" and whatever light has glimmered in the darkness of other religions has been a reflected beam from that sun:

> They are but broken lights of Thee
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

Faith, then, is the response of our whole soul, not of the mind alone, but also of the heart and affections and social instincts to Christ and to His Church so far as, often in spite of themselves—like the faithless prophets—and to their own condemnation, her official teachers are constrained by God's Spirit to preach Christ; and to hold up to the world the light by which perhaps they themselves refuse to walk.

And of this truth a kind of induction gives us an almost experimental assurance. For it is ever in what we know to be our best moods that we find ourselves most in sympathy with Christ; when we walk most faithfully by the light of conscience; when we are freest from the warp and bias of violent emotions or unruly attachments and prepossessions; when we are enjoying the fullest liberty of self-mastery; when, in short, we are living the life of Christ. On the contrary, it is in what we know are our worst moods, that the light of faith begins to grow dim; when we are disturbed, tempted, distracted, out of sympathy with our conscience. In other words, our better self is always more responsive, our worse self always less responsive, to the call of

Christ; and it is this experienced fact that makes us as impervious to all merely rationalistic or critical difficulties against our faith, as we should be to those urged against our personal identity. Christ is no longer an abstraction for us; nor a bundle of arguments, but an object of experience and real contact: "Whom I have seen; whom I have loved; in whom I have believed; in whom I have delighted;" or as St. John has it: "That which was from the beginning; which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have examined through and through, and handled with our hands."

XVIII.

THE DESIRE OF ALL AGES.

The First-born of every creature.—Col. i. 15.

Prophecy is more easily understandable if we remember the somewhat organic nature of God's entire work; how that the final result is really contained in the first germ, and the entire process governed and each step of it explained by the idea of the End. As every animal is but a lower offshoot of that tree of life whereof man is the crown; so the just man of every age, and his history, is but an imperfect essay at that ideal which is realized in Christ alone. After many vain reachings towards one another, sea and sky at last unite in the waterspout; and so in the prophets, heroes, and great ones of all time, heaven and earth have strained towards a union realized only in the Word-made-Flesh. Hence, so many features are common to

the lives and characters of all just and holy men, in so far as they converge upwards and towards that point of union of the Divine and Human.

Since the man is in the boy, as the flower is in the seed, there are, in each earlier stage of life, conscious anticipations and prognostications of the later; prophetic figurings of what is going to be; and similarly in the life of the race, considered as an organic unity, the collective consciousness of primitive times, "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming of things to come" may have felt and roughly pictured to itself, in terms of things familiar, the later phases of its own development. The prophet (in any department of knowledge) or the seer, is one whose mind is in more sensitive sympathy with the collective mind of his own times; who enters more deeply into the contemporary life of his nation or people, and can forecast by instinctive sagacity the coming phases of its progress. The religious prophet is one who enters also into the mind of God to some degree, and thus has access to that chief factor in the making of futurity, from which the natural mind is excluded. But since all growth and progress is effected by the working of the universal Mind and Will in each several part of creation; it is conceivable that even in the natural order some more than others should have a special gift of introspective divination, *i.e.*, of interpreting and guessing at the aims of that interior Power to which they are habitually obedient.

The religious sense, like every other sense, in the measure that it is developed, acquires, even in

the individual, a certain extension of insight and foresight that is prophetic in the eyes of those not similarly endowed. But it is only in some sort of religious society that this sense can normally be wakened and educated so as to appropriate the acquisitions of the general mind, to add to them and to put the impress of personal character upon them. Through intercourse these personal increments are gradually made common property and modify the general religious sense of the community. The strictly prophetic mind, in the natural order, is one in which the general religious sense of the community is so comprehensively and distinctly reproduced as to reveal those remoter implications and consequences which are neither contained within the narrower horizon nor perceptible to the less sensitively sympathetic vision of the average good man. If we all contribute to the quiet increment of the general religious sense through which God reveals Himself, it is through the prophets that it receives what are more properly developments—changes of character and not merely of intensity. Thus in the Sacred Scriptures we find the Messianic ideal passing periodically from one stage of spiritualisation to another; till through Christ Himself it was stripped of the last shreds of material grossness and worldly gaudiness and left naked on the Cross in all its divine beauty. The vague desire of the nations, of man in the misery of his savagery and barbarism, or rather, of God's Spirit striving in man, slowly worked itself clear and found its full utterance and expression in Christ crucified.

XIX.

THE SACRED HUMANITY.

No creature should hold us back from God, since not even our Lord Himself, in so far as He vouchsafed to become the Way wished to hold us back, but went from us lest we should cleave weakly to those things done and suffered by Him, in time, for our salvation instead of hastening onwards more quickly by means of them.[1]

Christ in His humanity, is the Way, and no man cometh to the Father but by that Way; for, no man hath seen God at any time, that he should have any adequate or proper conception of the Divine nature, or should see otherwise than through the darkened glass of analogies drawn from finite things; or in the enigmas of antimony and paradox. But the Only-Begotten "who is in the bosom of the Father," He hath declared Him and manifested His Name or Nature upon earth; He hath shown us the Father as far as the Father can possibly be shown to minds like ours; as far as He can be spoken in human language, and expressed in the terms of the most perfect human life. "The Word" (the reflex of the Father) "was made flesh," was translated into the terms of humanity, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. He who hath seen Him hath, so far, seen the Father; for there is nothing in Him of gentleness, goodness, love, wisdom, power,

[1] "Nulla res in via ad Deum tenere nos debet, quando nec ipse Dominus, inquantum via nostra esse dignatus est, tenere nos voluit, sed transire; ne rebus temporalibus, quamvis ab illo pro salute nostra susceptis et gestis, hæreamus infirmiter, sed per eas potius curramus alacriter." (Aug., *De Doct. Christ.* ch. 34.)

compassion, sorrow, and suffering, that is not in the Father superexcellently and beyond all comprehension. And those who know the nature of the human mind, will see that there is no way to the knowledge of the Father but by Him; that we must conceive God human-wise or not at all; that the object of our love must be, not merely a personality but a human personality; and that therefore the highest humanity is the highest image we can possess of the unimaginable divinity. Yet we must not *rest* in the way, but by it pass into that Rest which lies beyond it "in the Bosom of the Father," when Christ shall deliver up the keys that God may be all in all. For the end of all this image-making and image-worship is to prepare our mind and heart for the direct knowledge and love of the imaged reality; to raise us to that highest point of spiritual evolution in the present order at which we are to pass into an order of Knowledge and Love as different from this, as this is from the merely animal level of conscious existence. The chasm that separates life from the lifeless, sense from the senseless, reason from the irrational, the superspiritual from the spiritual, is in all cases equally mysterious.

XX.

THE SON OF GOD.

What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?—Matt. xxii.

The contention that there was little or on Christology in Christ's teaching: that it was His enthusiastic followers who first laid such stress on

what He *was*, as distinct from what He *said* and *did* —on the Revealer as distinct from His revelation— is a popular and plausible criticism that will not bear close examination. To expurgate even the synoptic Gospels of the many quiet matter-of-fact claims He made concerning His own person and dignity— claims which, on the part of the greatest of prophets, would have been held arrogant and blasphemous— would be to leave an unrecognizable residuum of Christianity whose power and attractiveness and subsequent conquest of the world would be very unintelligible.

It is the belief that He who for our sakes became poor, who felt and ministered to our infirmities of body and mind, who knelt to wash our feet, who bore to be put to death by our foes—those wolves that prey upon the flock—it is the belief that He was really our God and Maker, long veiled from our eyes under the terrible masks of men's devising, now at last revealing Himself in all His humanity and benignity, full of grace and truth, that alone explains the spell exerted by the name of Jesus over the nations of the earth. If He had come principally to reveal the unknown or mis-known Father, it was not merely by means of words and syllables strung together, whence the hearer might build up in his own mind some tottering image of the ineffable Reality; but He was Himself, in His manhood, that revelation: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"—hath seen the fullest possible expression of the Divine character in the terms of human character—hath seen man's life as lived by Him who

made man. Hence, in order to reveal the Father He had to reveal Himself; and so He asks, not merely once in a way and verbally, but continually, and by His whole life, ministry, and death: "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?"—for if He be the Son of God, then He that knoweth the Son knoweth the Father also, whose features He bears. His own personality was therefore the central point of His teaching: He bore witness to Himself—as His adversaries complained from first to last.

What lends plausibility to the rationalistic criticism above mentioned is the fact that the dogma of the Divinity of Christ and of the Hypostatic Union, in its purely intellectual and metaphysical aspect, is so far removed from common modes of thought and from the capacity of ordinary men, unversed in the theology of the schools, that it seems wholly out of keeping with the simplicity of the Gospel to suppose that Christ, whose mission was mainly to the poor and uncultured; who addressed Himself so much to the heart and so little to the mind, should expect of His disciples a theory concerning Himself so bewilderingly beyond the comprehension of the vast majority: or that, failing this, He should be content with, or set any value on, a merely verbal assent of obedience to a belief upon which the whole of the Christian's inward life must be built—the belief namely, that Christ is God.

Plainly, then, there is some living, life-giving manner of apprehending this truth other than the intellectual, nor should we willingly allow that any

soul could be at a spiritual disadvantage through mere speculative incapacity. Did the eternal life of the many depend on their mental accuracy—on their understanding what theology understands by God, Nature, Person, Union, how few could be saved! As to Nature and Personality—their definition and their relation to one another—theologians themselves are divided into opposite and irreconcilable schools. The very term "Person" has so changed its meaning in many modern languages that it were almost a truer translation of theology to say there are two persons in Christ and one in the Godhead; since by "person" is now understood a distinct mind and will. If the conceptions of the wise and learned are so unclear, what shall we say of those of the uneducated or untheological?

We shall certainly not say that, for most of them the dogma: "Christ is God" is a mere jangle of words to which no internal meaning answers. For man is before mind and prior to mind. Mind is but a part of him, torn away from the rest by abstraction, for purposes of clear speech and methodical thought: but in reality what we call mind, will, act, affection, feeling, sense, are but aspects of one indivisible being—man. Things may have a meaning and reality for the whole man, long before they have a clear meaning for his mind whose office it is to express, measure, and formulate what is first given in his concrete experience. A word, name, or phrase may answer to no definite or coherent idea of the mind, and yet be full of inward meaning for the soul: it may express the state of the affection,

the practical attitude of the will, the response of the whole spiritual nature to the object signified by the word or phrase in question. God is known to man long before, and better than, He is known to the mind of man. Long before the notions of law and causality are formulated, long before such words as "Self-subsistent" and "Infinite" are required, those whom we regard as savages may feel, and confess with their will, the same God of whom they think and speak so much more childishly than we do. For those crowds to whom Christ spoke, God was far more human, far less metaphysical, than He is for even popular theology in these days: He was the Father, Maker, and Judge of all men, but the notion of His spirituality had to be enforced and was, as it always is, a difficult conception for the many. That He was one and supreme, all-seeing, all-mighty, were truths of revelation, rather than of reason: derived from prophets, rather than from schoolmen. The notion of another God than Jehovah would have shocked their faith more than their reason—their soul, more than their mind. To them, perhaps, the multiplication of Divine persons, the notion of a Son of God, was less of a mystery to reason, than it is to us: though not less, but more, of a difficulty to their faith,—seeming, as it did, to contradict the central dogma of their religion.

To such as these—to Peter, Andrew, James, and John, to Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus—what did the truth of Christ's Godhead mean? As a theological conception, as an apprehension of the mind, little or nothing that they could define. As an

apprehension of the whole soul,—all or more perhaps, than it means for the profoundest theologian. It meant that the whole practical attitude of the will and affections towards Him was that which befits the creature in relation to its Creator—an attitude of *latria*, of absolute worship, submission, and devotion, such as is due to God alone. The theoretical justification of this attitude was of secondary importance, compared with the fact of its existence.

A truth ceases to be, for us, a mere speculation, and becomes a conviction, as soon as we begin to treat it as a reality, to adapt our life to it, to allow for it in our conduct and in our thought. It thereby becomes a reality for us—for that is relatively real which acts upon us and modifies our action. And for this reason it can be a conviction of our soul, long before it has become a necessity for our thought.

Thus it is that the dogma "Christ is God" can be most real and no mere formula to millions for whom it means little intellectually. Whatever place He may occupy in the dim labyrinth of their tangled thoughts; yet in their lives, in their affections, in their whole will-attitude, He is their God, "whose they are: whom they serve;" He is that one being of their own species whom they may safely idolize and whom they can never love too much. He asks of them no perplexing comprehension of His infinite claims, but only that no creature shall take that place in their affection and action which is due to Him alone. "He that loveth father or mother more

than Me is not worthy of Me," and "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it," and "Unless a man forsake all that he hath he cannot be My disciple." These are the practical claims of Divinity. He who, in his inward and outward life, puts Christ before all, even before his own life and the objects of his deepest affection, thereby admits His Godhead with a conviction more vital than any of which the bare intellect is capable. And yet who is so simple or childlike as to be incapable of this conviction? Who cannot yield to Christ that place in his life which else he must idolatrously yield to self or to some creature—for without a god no man can live?

Our life, internal and external, is the expression of the deepest convictions of our soul of which even our own formal and explicit thought may take no account. It is from the whole soul and not from the surface of the mind alone that we must answer the question: "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?"

XXI.

THE ATONEMENT.

Behold the Lamb of God who beareth the sins of the world. —John i. 29.

The story of Job, who is the typical Just Man of all ages and races, and of whom Christ is the fullest antitype, is designed to bring out the difference between Christian collectivism and worldly individualism and to establish the true relations of personality and society.

According to his three comforters, personal

suffering must always be the punishment of personal sin: Job suffers, therefore he has sinned; let him confess his sin, and God will stay His chastening hand: "The soul that sinneth it shall die," is seemingly the word of God and certainly the word of natural justice; and the inference follows easily, if not altogether logically, that the soul that dies or suffers must have sinned. This is life as they conceive it ought to be; that it appears otherwise, is but appearance and no more; and God's own day will banish the darkness.

Job, on the other hand, holds through thick and thin to the acquittal his conscience accords to him; and God in the end justifies Job, and rebukes the presumption and arrogance of those who would pretend to read the mysteries of His Providence and to mete out His justice in their own petty scales.

Suffering is not necessarily the punishment of personal sin, but oftenest a consequence of the fact that we are not isolated units, but are linked together into one body, whereof if one member sorrow or rejoice the others perforce must rejoice or sorrow with it. That God makes His sun to shine, His rain to fall, on the just and the unjust indiscriminately, is not appearance but fact; and the spiritual equivalent of this fact is found in the blessings that fall upon the evil through the merits of the good, and the afflictions that befall the good through the demerits of the evil. It is a matter of experience that, as human society is constituted, the evil results of sin fall continually and largely

upon the innocent, while the worthless and undeserving reap the harvests of blessing which others have sown. And yet this glaring inequality which at first sight is the abiding scandal of God's creation, may, on closer thought, seem to be an element of a wider harmony than we can now comprehend.

In her worship of the Holy Innocents, those involuntary sufferers on Christ's account, the Church seems to admit a principle of redemption whereof the Atonement is but the highest and fullest application—the principle, namely, that the sufferings entailed upon the innocent in the carrying out of God's dispensation have an expiatory and intercessory value for the taking away of the sins of the world. "Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of His holy ones." God must be at least as good as the best of us; must realize, in infinitely transcending, our highest moral ideals. But we ourselves should feel some debt of generosity, if not of rigorous justice, to one whom we had all unintentionally injured in estate or reputation through the lawful prosecution of our own rights, duties, or plans. It is for the universal good, for the ultimate gain of all, that God's world should be governed, not freakishly, but by firmly established and seemingly relentless laws, so that free, self-forming personalities may be able by the investigation, knowledge, and use of these laws to shape their own destinies according to the Divine Will so revealed. Else, they would be as the children of some weak, capricious father whose will, alterable at every cry of discontent, would be incalculable, and his house-

hold a lawless chaos. And so God's mill grinds out the general good according to the fixed laws of Nature, of human thought, of human life, nor will He lightly alter their ruthless mechanism or throw His system into confusion in response to those short-sighted and often selfish murmurings against His wisdom and goodness, which would subject the universal interest to our own. Rather He leads us to that higher faith which prays, not that the chalice may pass; but that strength may be given to drain it; not that His will may be altered, but ours; which takes evil from His hand as well as good, nor seeks shallow interpretations of the details of His providence.

Yet is it credible for a moment that any living creature should suffer blamelessly in the grinding out of God's general designs; should be crushed or torn in the wheels of His mill and go unrecompensed? Nor is it here only a question of physical suffering, of hunger and thirst, of sickness, pain, and death; but also of every spiritual and moral hurt or privation which results inevitably from the limitations of general laws—of ignorance, darkness, degradation, of inherited defects of temperament and "taints of blood," of morally poisonous environment, of all that, not being fault meriting penalty, is misfortune meriting compassion and compensation. So far as these evils result to the individual from the determinism of Nature which is established in the interests of that far-off general good which is spoken of in revelation as the Kingdom and the Glory of God, our moral sense, which is a faint

echo of the divine, clamours for compensation to the injured and maimed, in soul or body, to the Innocents who have died, not willingly even, but only incidentally, that Christ might live, *i.e.*, for the general good and for the Will of God.

It is surely not too much to hope that all the unmerited, though involuntary, sufferings in the world, incidental to the working out of God's plans; the sufferings not merely of those who have sinned and therefore deserve to suffer in some form, but the sufferings of the sinless, of little children, nay, even of the dumb creatures of whom God has care, may all be taken under, and sanctified by the sufferings of the Most Innocent One who is the "recapitulation" of all creatures—and may thus receive a sacramental efficacy for the blotting out of the sins of the world.

Still more is this credible in regard to the voluntary patience of God's saints, martyrs, confessors, and prophets in all times; whom He has sent forth as lambs into the midst of wolves for the saving of their destroyers. It is because "the world" (*i.e.*, the strong majority of the worldly) being corrupted by sin hates God and what is godlike, that it of necessity hates, persecutes, and kills the godlike, god-loving man. But he, in the measure that he emulates God, and instead of resisting evil with evil, takes it into himself, lest it should react upon the doer; in the measure that he prays: "Father forgive them" and "Lay not this sin to their charge" is, in a still higher order, a participator in the redemption of sinners, and

makes intercession for the transgressors with whom he is united as part of the same living organism.

But the sufferings of His servants would have availed little, had not God in the fulness of time sent forth His Son, the heir of the whole Kingdom of Justice and Holiness, in whom the manifold righteousness of all the saints is gathered up to a focus of infinite brilliancy—the Lamb of God who beareth the sins of the whole world. In every violation of conscience we extinguish some little spark of the divinity that is in us; we eliminate God from our lives. All sin is some sort of God-murder—"We will not have this man to reign over us." And what each one of us does to that Divine One who in the midst of our soul struggles against the godless crowd of our passions and impulses; that, the world does always and everywhere to the "just man," who is to society what conscience is to the individual. Most of all did it seize upon God's dearest and best beloved, upon the Lamb of God, tearing Him limb from limb, so that in the slain Son of God we see sin revealed and made palpable and visible in its true character. "This is the heir; let us kill him and the heritage shall be ours."

Yet if the slaying of Christ was the great sin and self-condemnation of the world, compared with which all other violences done to God or to His Saints seem trivial; it was also the great expiation and redemption, under which, and in union with which, all the meekness and voluntary sufferings of the Saints get a new and sacramental expiatory value, making therewith one organic total of suffer-

ing whereby the sin of the world is covered and forgotten.

Of its own nature sin leads eventually to misery, and is the poison of human happiness; when man flings himself rebelliously against the adamantine rock of God's will, he but shatters himself to pieces. He intends murder, but effects suicide. But God, in His pitying meekness, instead of resisting, yields, that the hurt may be all His and in nowise ours. And this too He makes visible to us, in taking to Himself the passible nature of our humanity, in which when He might have come down from the Cross He would not; "When He was reviled He reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not." Christ as man, in His human mind and will, by His sympathy with the "meekness and pity" of God, and by His perfect intelligent obedience to the Father's forgiving will, showed Himself to be that Beloved Son in whom God was so well pleased that the sin of the world was hid from His displeasure and obliterated.

Thus by the exercise of His creative prerogative which draws good out of evil, order from chaos, and light from darkness, God made (and ever makes) man's most suicidal act instrumental to his fullest salvation. *O certe necessarium Adæ peccatum! O Felix culpa quæ talem et tantum meruit habere redemptorem! O mira circa nos tuæ pietatis dignatio*—"O truly needful sin of Adam; O happy fault which won such and so great a ransom; O wondrous graciousness of Thy encompassing pity!"

It is not then accurate to say that Christ, con-

sidered as a separate individual, was "punished" for our sins, though He suffered for them and because of them. It was because the world was a sinful world that God's Lamb, coming to His own, came into the midst of wolves and was torn by them; and yet came knowingly and willingly that He might save them through being torn by them. Yet if we consider Him as making with the whole race one thing, then indeed it was the whole body of humanity that sinned (in virtue of its guilty members) and was punished for its sin with a punishment that fell also upon its innocent members, chief of whom was Christ, the Saint of saints; and these by their meek submission have purchased glory for themselves and redemption for their sinful brethren.

XXII.

THE PASSION.

Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. —Is. liii. 4.

The mother who watches the sufferings of her infant suffers herself far more by sympathy. Could we conceive a human mind which could comprehend in all its distinctness the whole history of the world's griefs and sorrows—present, past, and to come—of its pain, weariness, sickness, poverty, hunger, and thirst; of all its bodily anguish and want; of all its mental sufferings, darkness, doubts, perplexities, ignorances, and errors; all humiliations and woundings of self-esteem; all shame and disgrace; all calumnies, slanders, and injustices;

all the sorrows of the heart and affections; the partings of friends, disappointments, betrayals, infidelities, deaths, and losses; all temptations and spiritual conflicts, and defeats; and could we conceive a human heart that could love each of us as God loves us—God who has created the human heart and filled it with pity and tender affection—and which could feel for us and with us as God feels for us and with us—each and all; then we should understand the passion of Christ; how He took upon Himself,—into His own mind and heart—all the griefs, sins, and sorrows of our race, and felt them more than we ourselves could feel them. In this again He is the Just Man *par excellence;* for all God's Saints and great ones have in some measure entered into and felt by sympathy the sorrows and sins of their people; and this, because of something godlike in them. But Christ Who *is* God could turn the gaze of His human soul to the mirror of His divine mind and see there the full record of the whole creation's groaning and travailling from first to last; and could use this piercing insight as a sword to cleave His most tender and sympathetic heart in twain. What He suffered in His own separate personality, in the way of temptation, bodily weariness, pain, and wounding; in the way of scorn, mockery, and injustice; in the way of grief, disappointment, and separation—as it were sampling each class of suffering—was but a drop in the ocean of His passion; a mere symbolization of the spiritual crucifixion of all humanity which was repeated and

intensified in His own soul by supernatural insight and sympathy. Thus has He taken on Himself even the very least of our pains and aches; even the tiny sorrows and crosses of childhood; and has thereby consecrated them with a sacramental efficacy and made them part of that great organic body of suffering whereof His passion is the soul and unitive principle; and by which the sin of the world is blotted out of the sight of God, and the dark cloud between earth and heaven lit up with a sunset glory.

The deeper we enter into and realize the truth of our corporate unity with the whole race, present and past, the liker are we to Him who so realized it that He bore all the sins and sorrows of the world as though they were His own personal sins and sorrows. We sometimes speak of "blushing for our common humanity" at witnessing some deed of shame and degradation; yet only for a few does the phrase express a real emotion of shame such as we should feel for the disgrace of parent, spouse, or child. One of the many ways in which self-centralization ministers to pride is in striking this load of shame off our shoulders and enabling us to stand erect like the Pharisee—all unaware that the publican's sins are our own. We must either disown our poor relations or else share their shabbiness and poverty.

XXIII.

WATER AND BLOOD.

And straightway there came forth water and blood.—John xii. 34.

That is, from the heart of Christ, the symbol of that Eternal Love which is the very core of the Divinity round which all the other Divine attributes cluster, at once revealing and hiding it. And because the deepest and most central, it is often the hardest to distinguish, being, in relation to our knowledge, as it were the buried root of the Godhead. From this source issue forth in divergent streams water and blood; good and evil; light and darkness; purity and guilt; life and death; to this, again, these seeming contraries will converge at the last; and show themselves to be but the many-coloured strands from which the web of God's glory is woven. We see but the middle of the process where the divergence is at its greatest; but the beginning and the end are buried in those two infinite nights which are cleft asunder by the brief day of our mortal existence.

Nor does the imperfect nature of our vision merely break up what is pure and simple into a chaos of conflicting parts; it also colours what is transparent and colourless; it changes water into blood. To our less than childish estimate the Lover of our soul seems at times cruel and bloodthirsty—"Clad in a vesture stained with blood and His name was the Word of God." This is in truth *the* mystery of faith, namely, that sorrow and darkness

and death should spring from and manifest the same Love as joy and light and life; that the same fountain should bring forth bitter and sweet; that the same central attraction should draw and repel, causing one substance to sink and another to float; that blood no less than water should flow forth from the very heart of the dying God to deluge the earth and to return again to its source having accomplished all whereunto it was sent; that God should look back upon all that now seems to us evil in the labour of His hands, and pronounce the sum total to be "exceeding good."

All serious, as opposed to crudely rationalistic, difficulties against faith are directed against the goodness and wisdom of God, and thus our problem is the problem of evil. "If there were a God," we say, "these things could not be; either He cannot prevent sin and suffering; and so He is not almighty; or He will not, and so He is not all-loving." Even in regard to the mysteries of revelation, the chief difficulties are quite analogous to those which are offered to us by the spectacle of the natural world; difficulties which offend what we feel and know to be the best in us—our higher wisdom, our benevolence and justice and faithfulness; difficulties suggested by such seeming unwisdom and cruelty as is involved in the mysteries of predestiny, eternal punishment and the like.

But here it is that faith comes in with its wise hesitancy and checks the first impulse of our mind to cry out: "God can never have said it." Our better reason rebukes us and asks: "He that made

the eye shall He not see? He that gave us our sense of equity and justice and benevolence, shall He not prove in the event just and fair and gentle and loving beyond our wildest dreams? Shall man be more just than His Maker; or shall the stream rise higher than its source?" And together with this, it tells us that a partial view, still more an infinitesimally fractional view of any action and its motives is necessarily distorted, and that God's kindness not only may but often must seem cruelty, and His wisdom folly, until we can know all as He knows it.

We are not then to deny these mysteries, but to regard them as half-truths whose edges will seem jagged and crooked till the other halves are adjusted to them. It is in some sense as a riddle whose absurdity does not scandalize us because we know it is a riddle,—true in some sense, but precisely in what sense, we know not. The only difference is that, a riddle is designed to obscure a truth, whereas a revelation is designed to make as much of it plain as will be profitable and bearable for us. Hence we should never attempt to alleviate the difficulty of, say, the doctrine of Hell or of Predestination by forced explanations and rationalistic conjectures; but rather accentuate and emphasize it; we should admit freely and fearlessly that were any man to act as God seems to act, were he to give favours that he knew infallibly would be used by the recipient to his eternal hurt, and so forth, such a man's conduct would be indefensible; and that God does come to us in blood-stained garments, and presents Himself

to us under an appearance of injustice and severity that would be intolerable, were we to credit appearances. But knowing that Love is at the heart of everything, we know as certainly that what shocks us in revelation or in nature, is the creation of our own limited vision; that when we shall see all, "God shall be justified in His sayings."

Of this noble nescience, Mother Julian of Norwich writes as follows:

"There be many evil deeds done in our sight, and so great harms taken that it seemeth to us that it were impossible that ever it should come to a good end. And upon this we look, and sorrow and mourn therefor. So that we cannot rest us in the blissful beholding of God, as we should do. And the cause is this, that the use of our reason is now so blind, so low, and so simple, that we cannot know the high marvellous wisdom, the might, and the goodness of the blissful Trinity. And this meaneth He where He saith: *Thou shalt see thyself that all manner of thing shall be well.* . . . There is a deed which the blissful Trinity shall do in the last day (as to my sight); and what that deed shall be, and how it shall be done, it is unknown of all creatures which are beneath Christ; and shall be [unknown] till when it shall be done. The goodness of our Lord God willeth that we wit it shall be; and the might and the wisdom of Him, by the same love, will conceal it and hide it from us, *what* it shall be, and *how* it shall be done. And the cause why He wisheth us to know that it shall be is this; that He wisheth us to be more eased in our soul, and

peaceable in love, leaving the beholding of all tempests that might hinder us from truly believing in Him. This is the great deed ordained by God our Lord from eternity; treasured and hid in His blessed Breast, known only to Himself, by which deed He shall make all things well; for right as the Blessed Trinity made all things out of nothing; right so the same Blessed Trinity shall make well all that is not well. And in this sight I marvelled greatly and beheld our faith; meaning thus: Our faith is grounded in God's word; and it belongeth to our faith that we believe that God's word shall be saved in all things. And one point of our faith is that many creatures shall be damned, [such] as the Angels that fell out of Heaven for pride; and many on earth that died out of the faith of Holy Church. . . . All these shall be damned to Hell without end as Holy Church teacheth me to believe; and, standing all this, methought it was impossible that all manner of thing should be well, as our Lord showed in this time. And as to this I had no other answer in the showing of our Lord, but this: *That which is impossible to thee is not impossible to Me; I shall save My word in all things, and I shall make all things well.* And in this I was taught by the grace of God, that I should steadfastly hold me fast in the faith as I had before understood; and *therewith* that I should stand and firmly believe that all manner of thing shall be well, as our Lord showed in the same time. For this is the great deed that our Lord God shall do; in which deed He shall save His word in all things, and He shall make well all that is not

well. But what that deed shall be, and how it shall be done, there is no creature beneath Christ that knoweth it, nor ever shall know it till it be done."

This is not universalism, but a repudiation of that facile solution, and yet it is as solacing a doctrine, or rather more, for it at once saves the truth of the Christian faith, and assures us that all shall be well. Nor do we rest on this vision as though it contained some new point of revelation, for it only insists upon what reason and revelation alike assure us of, that God's goodness infinitely transcends our utmost conception, and what appears otherwise is only appearance.

Elsewhere we read that she says to our Lord: "*Ah, good Lord, how might all be well for the great harm that is come by sin to Thy creatures?* . . . And to this our Blessed Lord answered full meekly, and with lovely cheer, and showed that Adam's sin was the most harm that was ever done, or ever shall be unto the world's end. . . . Furthermore He learned me that I should behold the glorious satisfaction, for this satisfaction-making is more pleasing to the Blessed Godhead, and more worshipful for man's salvation than ever was the sin of Adam harmful. Then meaneth our Blessed Lord thus: '*For since that I have made well by the most harm, then it is my will that thou know thereby that I shall make well all that is less.*'

Once more she draws a distinction between that mere fringe of eternity that appears to us through a rift in the cloud, and the infinite substance thereof which lies beyond our ken: "The one part is our

Saviour and our salvation. This blessed part is open, clear, fair and light and plenteous. . . . Hereto we be bound of God, and drawn and counselled, and learned inwardly by the Holy Ghost and outwardly by Holy Church. . . . The other part is hid and shut up from us, that is to say, all that is besides [*i.e.*, not pertinent to] our salvation; for that is our Lord's privy counsel; and it belongeth to the royal Lordship of God to have His privy counsels in peace; and it belongeth to His servants, for obedience and reverence, not to will to know His counsels. Our Lord hath pity and compassion on us, for that some creatures make themselves so busy therein; and I am sure if we wist how greatly we should please Him and ease ourselves to leave it, we would. The Saints in Heaven will to know nothing but what God our Lord shall show them, . . . and thus ought we, that our will may be like to theirs."

In all this one cannot fail to be struck with the deep and true reasonableness of such faith, as contrasted with the shallow rationalism of dogmatic denial and the subtler rationalism of agnostic despair. Doubtless, faith, like morality, is the more difficult attitude and involves a continual straining against our own narrowness and contraction of view. We need only "let go" in order to drift down to agnosticism and rationalism, as to a position of stable equilibrium. If we never look at or think of the stars, the world will seem as big to us as it does to the most untutored savage; and if our reason is never exercised on matters that exceed it, it soon thinks itself equal to everything.

XXIV.

THE RESURRECTION.

They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him. And when she had said this she turned behind her and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.—John xx.

This incident of Mary weeping at the empty tomb has received many mystical applications at the hands of preachers—all more or less fanciful; but it is not uncommonly used in these days of failing faith as a picture of the overwhelming desolation and perplexity of many a devout soul in the face of that all-destructive criticism which seems to have changed or wholly obliterated the old landmarks of religion and which leaves it gazing with strained eyes into the grave of its shattered hopes. "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him." Yet surely it is inept and violent thus to tear part of the incident from the living unity of its context and to find in the fragment a symbol of despair, when the unbroken whole gives us a divine lesson of imperishable hope, which he who runs may read. There is a certain wantonness, characteristic of those in love with death and darkness, in thus stopping short and refusing to see the issue of the process by which God brings joy out of sorrow and fruition out of loss; killing that He may quicken; disappointing that He may satisfy abundantly beyond our utmost expectations.

For what was that hope together with which Mary's heart was shattered and the fountains of her

deep love set free in rivers of tears? A lowly hope begotten of a feeble flickering faith; for with her, Love had grown in wild luxuriance at the expense, it might seem, of the sister graces. She had no ears for what Jesus said; the prediction of His passion and resurrection were to her as the serious talk of parents to the ears of their little ones who gaze up at the dear faces and feel confident that all will be well whatever these strange words may mean. Her soul lived on the sound of His voice, more than on the sense of His words; and thus the fact of His death had driven from her mind whatever vague dreamings the predictions of His resurrection may have given birth to. He was dead, and that one thought engrossed all her affection and all her understanding; Faith and Reason were paralyzed in the grip of grief. What remained for her now but to seek relief in every natural utterance of her pent-up sorrow, to empty the broken vessel of her heart and pour the spikenard of her love over all that was left to her of Him, to hasten to His tomb at the first lawful moment, "very early ere the sun was yet risen," outstripping all others in the energy of her devotedness, to seek the dead among the dead. This then was the humble goal of her desires, the object of that hope which kept her from sinking into the apathy and listlessness of utter despair; while any sacred relic of Him remained upon earth, life and love could find something to feed upon, something round which past memories could cluster and re-embody themselves so as to be tasted over and over again and become a perpetual experience.

Day by day as long as her widowed life might last would she come to that sacred spot and sit in spirit at His feet and in fancy hear His voice calling her by her name: "Mary!"

But as we now contemplate her, this last glimmer of hope has been rudely extinguished; the little house of refuge which her soul had built for itself on the sands of illusion has crashed down and left her homeless and desolate. Again and again, with an obstinate incredulity that will not resign itself to the worst and disbelieves its own eyes, she peers into the darkness of the sepulchre and gropes with her hands in every corner and gathers each time a new conviction of despair which is cast away forthwith, to be presently sought anew. It is indeed her darkest hour, yet, as the by-word goes, it is also that closest upon the dawn. "When thou thinkest all is lost then art thou often in the way of the greatest gain; when thou deemest I am furthest from thee, then am I often nearest to thee." It is God's universal law in His dealings with the human soul, nay, with the human race, to suffer things to run their evil course that evil may cure itself, and in defeating itself give birth to good. Each lie must obtain credence and work itself out to its practical and speculative absurdities before the truth can be adequately mastered by minds such as ours. A slow and painful method it seems to us creatures of a brief day, impatient to behold the goodness of God in the land of the living, and to see the Lord's Christ ere we taste death.

For in the slow ages that are but as moments

to Him, how many must wander in darkness and death's shadow, how many a soul be starved and tortured, how many a heart must be crushed, and personality maimed and distorted in the long wearisome process by which truth and justice are ground out through the machinery of the natural laws by which the growth of humanity is governed! Surely His ways are not as our ways; and we are often constrained, not only by the limits of our intelligence, but by the imperative of our moral conscience to fight against God by seeking His glory in ways that seem effectual from our standpoint, though from His, they may be manifestly disastrous. We often may not let things go from bad to worse and reduce themselves to absurdity, even though it were plainly the only possible and effectual remedy; we are often bound to strive might and main against lying and iniquity, though in so doing we but retard the process of decay and corruption through which alone resurrection to a new and better life can be secured. We are compelled by our moral nature to labour and die for a foredoomed cause even as our bodily nature struggles to the bitter end against the relentless forces of dissolution. Throughout creation we see God everywhere thus fighting with Himself, one hand as it were against the other, pulling upwards and downwards, East against West and North against South; and reflection seems to show that this endless conflict of opposites, each balancing the other, is an essential condition of life and progress; that we must wrestle with God in order to force from Him those very blessings which He

longing to give, but can give on no other terms without hurt to our character. Hence He bids us seek Him in one direction that we may at last find Him in another, just when we have abandoned hope and are retracing our weary steps; He bids us fight for blessings that come through our defeat and not through our victory. Christ in His own person and in that of every Christ-like man, "agonized unto death for justice' sake," and in failing triumphed. In all this He deals with us as a wise-loving Father with His children, who governs not by caprice, over-interference and debilitating supervision and assistance; but according to fixed and established laws, not lightly to be set aside, and in accordance with which the young mind can shape and govern itself and quickly attain that independence and autonomy which is the essence of personality. At times there seems to us a ruthlessness in the way things are suffered to run their course, and work out their natural and inevitable consequences. We cannot see why God does not, will not, interfere with the relentless machinery of Nature which grinds on in spite of all our cries to the deaf Heavens. Vision so dim and narrow-ranged as ours needs the supplement of no little faith in that Love and Wisdom which we feel must be at the back of everything, if we are not to be perplexed even to madness in our endeavour to read God's riddles and equal our mind with His. Still in quiet moments, when we are not on the rack of doubt and bewilderment, reflection tells us that His ways not only are not, but could not possibly be as our ways, and are bound to seem

crooked and even cruel in our eyes until we see the whole of which they are but part.

In more ways than one, therefore, is Mary an image of disappointed hope. It was Divine Love Himself who drew her steps after Him *in odorem unguentorum suorum* to seek Him here where He could not be found—"the living among the dead;" who prepared this valley of sorrow and desolation in her heart that He might fill it to overflowing with the torrents of joy and gladness, who kept her eyes turned away from Him and peering into the darkness, that He might presently flood them with the brightness of His living glory.

And how is her night turned into day? Not by perseverance in the method of her quest, but by a sudden change of method and direction: *Conversa retrorsum.* At a word from Him, she turns round. Yet so possessed is she by the belief that He is to be sought among the dead, that, seeing Him among the living she knows Him not,—for we never recognize what we in no wise expect to see. And thus it is that deliverance comes to us in our darkest hour. What we need is a new standpoint—to turn right round and look behind us; to find Him living and near to us in the same moment that we sought Him dead and found Him not. Left to ourselves we should remain for ever gazing despairingly into the dark tomb from which He has vanished; but He who wisely permits us to stray, ever follows our footsteps; nor is our zealous quest less pleasing to Him because it is misguided: He says to the soul, *Mulier quid ploras quem quæris?* Why weepest thou?

Whom seekest thou? He knows well whom and why; nor could we care to seek Him were He not seeking us and drawing us to Himself—albeit through devious paths and crooked windings: *Tu enim prior excitasti me ut quærerem Te.*

And so it befalls that when hope is in its death agony, He speaks to our startled ears some word that makes us turn right round and find the truth behind our backs, and where we least expected it. How often have we not fled from our salvation as from the face of a serpent; and sought light in the darkness of some empty tomb! How often, on the other hand, have not our enemies been turned into our footstool, our rest and support? Dismayed by appearances, bewildered by the roar and tumult of the buoyant surf, we drive our ships for safety on the rock-bound coast and are dashed to pieces; when safety lay in pushing out further into the deep.

And so in these days of failing faith we destroy ourselves by cowardice veiled under a mask of prudence. We turn from the light of the living present to seek Christ in the gloom of the buried past—in the place where He lay but lies no more; He is not there, He is risen; why seek the living among the dead?

"Mary on turning round saw Jesus standing, but knew not it was Jesus;" and we in like manner are too stupefied by our prejudices and fixed ideas to recognize Him in any wholly unexpected quarter until He speaks to the very core of our heart and calls us by our name as none other can call us. Then indeed we are instantly at His feet, ashamed of our in-

credulity and slowness of heart. This stupidity or slowness of heart is indeed a grave flaw in the virtue of Faith; it implies a certain wilful obstinacy and disorderly attachment, not to the word of God, but to our own view of what God has said or can say—a mingling of the alloy of transitory philosophical, historical or scientific beliefs, or of our own personal reasonings and reflections with the pure gold of divine truth. Except a man forsake *all* that he hath, says the Truth, he cannot be My disciple. Detachment of the mind no less than detachment of the heart is the necessary condition of following God.

Faith is a certain pliability of the living mind in respect to the Truth, by which a man is ready to follow it "whithersoever it goeth" with perfect liberty, certain that God "will save His word in all things" and "be justified in His sayings." It is not a state of inflexible rigidity—of a rock graven with inscribed formulæ; but of a living converse between the Creator and the creature who sits at the Master's feet and drinks in the ever-progressive stream of His words. A faith which does not grow every instant into something new that swallows up and includes the faith of the moment before, is dead in formalism and unreality; for life is movement, before everything. Hence while living faith clings with unshaken confidence to the Divine Word, it is wholly detached from its own inadequate apprehension of that word; ever ready to receive continual correction and adjustment; never surprised at any new face the familiar but many-sided Truth may present. It will never

be so obstinately set upon looking for the Truth in one direction only, according to some ungrounded prepossession, as not to be ready at a word to turn right round and find Jesus standing in the light of the Sun, not lying in the darkness of the tomb; living among the living, not dead among the dead—nearest where He seemed furthest away.

XXV.

THE ASCENSION.

It is good for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I go, I will send Him unto you.—John xvi. 7.

Judged from our standpoint, down at the bottom of this narrow valley, nothing could be at first sight less expedient, nothing more disastrous for the Church than that her Spouse should go away. For example, it is to the fact of the Resurrection that we appeal as to the divine seal and signature of the Christian revelation. How invincibly evident its claims would have been to all men, how quickly it would have spread over the whole world, had the risen Christ continued these two thousand years in our midst as a living evidence of the fact. On the other hand, when the world says: "Show us the risen Christ that we may believe;" how weak-sounding an answer it is to say that His friends, not His enemies, bore witness to the fact that for forty days He appeared, not to His enemies but to His friends; that He was then caught up into the clouds and vanished from their sight!

Again, when we read the painful history of unending wranglings over points of belief, of heresies and schisms thence resulting; and think how simple it would have been if Christ had remained with us to interpret and supplement His own revelation directly, instead of leaving us to the slow and expensive method of theological development—even divinely assisted—it is not easy at once to see how His departure was so expedient for us.

Nor any more easy, when we reflect how much the Church has suffered through the unwisdom, the human frailty, nay, the wickedness of her rulers and pastors at one time or another; how her ethical and spiritual beauty has at times been obscured and changed to repulsiveness; and how different all might have been had He held the helm with His own hands throughout the ages; had His light shone forth in the eyes of all men that they might see and give glory to God.

Nor are the reasons He gives for His going less mysterious than the mystery they would solve, though to thoughtless hearers they seem partially satisfying. Like children, we are often content with the mere sound of a reason—with a "since" or "because," and inquire no further. "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come." Is it then obvious that the invisible Paraclete is more useful to us than the visible Incarnate Truth? or that He cannot come unless Christ go? or that He must, as it were, be fetched from some distant locality? Or that, at least, Christ could not return with Him? Are they contraries that exclude one another from

the same sphere? Cannot Christ, nay, does He not, exercise His intercessory office as fully on earth, whether upon Calvary or upon the Altar, as in some locally distant Heaven at God's right Hand? Need He go out of our sight in order to prepare a place for us, as though His action were limited by the bonds of space?

Plainly we have here but the form and sound of a reason without the reality; mystery is answered by deeper mystery; the unknown by the less known. And so it must ever be when we seek to know truths to which our mind is not yet grown. All explanation supposes some root of knowledge already in us into which the new truth can be engrafted, or from which it can be developed; but there are whole realms of truth in regard to which we have as yet not even the rudiments of an apprehension. As to what is proximately good for us, we can have some little wisdom of our own; but as to what is ultimately good, absolutely expedient, we are immeasurably less than babes in regard to Him who, from His infinite height, surveys all things together from end to end, from eternity to eternity. Hence that all things work together for the good of them that love God we can well believe; but how they so work we cannot possibly expect to comprehend; and we are but victims of merited illusion when to ourselves we seem to comprehend.

On Tabor we say confidently: "It is good for us to be here;" but God judges otherwise and brings us to Gethsemane. That good should come from the defeat of good, that the Son of God should con-

tinually be mocked and scourged and crucified, is an intolerable notion to our narrowness; and yet we have evidence that not merely in spite of, but through, and in, His defeat and humiliation He was glorified; that it behoved Christ to suffer and in suffering to enter into a spiritual glory whereof the radiance of His Risen Body was but the symbolic expression, suited to carnal minds as yet incapable of discerning the glory of Calvary.

And yet, without pretending to sound the deep-lying reasons of so great a mystery, we may note certain incidental advantages to set off against the no less incidental disadvantages of this strange dispensation.

As a principle of education it is obvious that to live continually at close quarters with a masterful personality, far above our own in mental and moral gifts, may be hurtful more than helpful to our growth. For in the first place we are encouraged in our race to emulate those ahead of us, so long as the intervening distance seems superable; but if the distance be altogether hopeless, the effect may rather be to dishearten. To live with a saint might drive many a one to disgust and despair. Christ in His converse with His disciples seems to have continually economized, and to have held the dazzling glory of His sanctity in reserve, making publicans and sinners at home with Himself. Else He would have lost touch with them and influence over them; even as in the training of their minds He could enlighten them only by condescending to use their language and modes of thought—not some ideally

perfect language and philosophy. The Good Shepherd goes in front of His sheep to lure them on;—but not miles in front. When for a brief moment Peter wakes to a sense of the Divinity veiled in everyday lowliness he cries: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" or again, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." He was not only overwhelmed by Majesty, but driven away by it. Hence Christ withdrew when the multitude would make Him a King and thereby end His power of secretly leavening the sinful masses in which He lay hidden. And when this secret ministry was over, and His eternal kingship had been proclaimed by the fact of His Resurrection, He withdrew Himself from His disciples as no longer profitable to them on earth in the way of direct influence; for He knew they would come and make Him a King and set an impassable barrier between His soul and theirs.

And perhaps moreover there would be some intolerable indecency and profanity in the attempt to array the Incarnate Son of God in the vulgar trappings of earthly power and gaudy splendour—in the notion of a Court of Christ. There was a godlike dignity in the garments of His poverty,—in the purple robe and the crown of thorns,—that gold and jewels could never express; there was a degree of worship in the hatred and contempt of the world which its praise and homage could never hope to equal.

But, secondly, it is bad for us to have an oracle ever at hand to settle every difficulty for us, to solve every problem; to have one who will supply every

want, carry every burden, and take on himself all our responsibility. It is only just so far as we cannot help ourselves that help is a real kindness,—that it is truly help. All beyond that, weakens us and retards our growth and development. To be a person is to be independent, distinct, active, self-helping; and so far as we are passive and dependent our personality is defective. Thus, while on earth Christ doled out His help to individuals according to this law; for His whole aim was spiritual development; to fulfil and not to destroy It may well be that the Church, regarded collectively, would have been hindered and not helped by His continued presence in her midst; that it was good for her to be thrown on her own resources, to have to struggle with the pains of growth; to be largely the mistress of her own destiny; to pass through weakness and humiliation into her glory; not indeed without His initial and continual help; but without superabundant and hurtful help. He will lead His flock like a Shepherd and He will carry the lambs in His arms,—but not the grown sheep.

XXVI.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church.—Matt. xvi. 18.

It is in virtue of her stability in the faith of Peter that the Church claims to be founded upon a rock, or upon Peter who was an immovable rock in his belief in the Divine Sonship of Christ.

As for his three-fold verbal denial who can put it on a level with his divinely inspired confession, or regard it as a fully-free, self-representative act, unveiling the deep convictions of the heart and will? Here we find exemplified the profound difference between the consent of the soul and the assent of the mind; between what a truth is for our whole being when we are, as we say, "all there," and what it is for us when we are more or less eclipsed and hidden from ourselves by some contracting fear, some blinding passion or prejudice; when we think, speak, or act hastily from the upper surface, not from the unseen depths of our personality; when we are determined to some extent passively by habit, impulse, impression; not actively and freely by the pure, unembarrassed self.

Comparatively rare in most lives are those moments when the clouds which wrap the bases of our being in darkness are rolled away and when the sharp isolated peak on which we seem to dwell habitually in our consciousness is seen to slope down and spread out till it merges in the common ground on which we all stand, from which we all spring.

Often in these flashes of illumination, a truth that has heretofore been denied, or held dreamily with the mind alone, is seen face to face as a solid reality, altering the whole complexion of life, calling forth a sudden and complete readjustment of the attitude of the will and affections that abides after the vision has departed from our memory. Ere the moment of his great confession, Peter may have

believed and said that Jesus was the Son of the Living God, he may have held to the truth and possessed it; but now the truth has taken hold of him and possessed him, branded itself ineffaceably upon his central soul; nor can he ever shake it off for any passing temptation, or tangle of the mind. Flesh and blood have not revealed it to him; his conviction depends on no persuasiveness of human eloquence or subtilty, on nothing that man can give or take away: "Your joy no man taketh from you," says Christ.

And of this ineradicable conviction of Christ's Godhead, the Church is heir—a conviction independent of flesh and blood; of the fluctuations of thought and theory; practical, effective, affective, rather than notional or speculative; a conviction of the whole soul and not merely of the mind,—not of a severed fraction of that living unity. This is that truth of which she has proved herself in history the unfailing, unwavering guardian. Whatever else she teaches it is but as implying or implied in this, whether as presupposition, or consequence. In substance, as in kind, her faith is no other than that of Peter's confession. Upon that she is built; in regard to that she is immovable and unchangeable as a rock. Her language, her forms of thought are those of many nations and many ages: but her faith—that conviction of her inmost soul which her mind can never compass exhaustively—is above those laws of change and progress by which its presentment is governed. As theologically conceived, Christ differs for different minds and stages

of intelligence; but for faith, and as a conviction of the soul, He is "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever"—He is practically related to the soul and the soul to Him as her Maker, Master, and God.

It is by her whole life and action in the world, by her worship and ritual, by the practical attitude of her will and affections in regard to Him—even more than by her formulated dogma—that the Church betrays the faith that is in her heart and proclaims Christ to be the Son of the Living God. Her chief *raison d'être* as a society, is by her corporate life and action to continue and extend to all ages and nations the faith and confession of Peter; to proclaim always and everywhere the Godhead of Christ crucified, that is, to vindicate for Him a right to that unlimited reverence, love, and service, of which her whole practical attitude is the manifestation. Her contest over the syllable that separates Arianism from orthodoxy has often been criticized as of purely metaphysical significance and as showing how quickly the simplicity of the Gospel had been supplanted in general interest by the barren subtleties of the schools. Yet it was as threatening Christ's supremacy in men's hearts and lives rather than in the interests of correct metaphysical speculation—on which she insists for its own sake no more than her Master—that she instinctively opposed herself might and main to a formula which, in the mind-language of that day, meant the dethroning of Christ from His seat by the right hand of the Father in the centre of man's soul.

Historically it is to the Church as an organized society that we owe the preservation of the personality of Christ and the extension of His salutary influence to all times and places; nor can we well conceive how the effect could possibly have been secured without such an organization.

Although it is for His sake only that we believe in and cling to His Church, and make ourselves one with that crowd which has followed Him for two thousand years; yet it is only through the Church that we are able to know Him at all. It is she who has treasured the records of His earthly life, and made them the supreme rule of her official teaching; and by her ceremonial, which accords them a relative honour almost divine, has secured them a reverence which those, who have long since discarded her ceremonial, still inherit—almost in spite of themselves.

It is not to His followers severally and in isolation that Christ has transmitted the faith of Peter, but to the whole Church as one many-membered organism. No great idea can be developed: that is to say, no great reality can be exhaustively comprehended, by the labour of one mind, or of many minds in one generation. It needs the collaboration of generation after generation, each enriched by the experience and reflection of the preceding. The unfolding of the implications of her unchanging faith in the Godhead of Christ, the explanation of her sentiment and will-attitude in regard to Him, the translation into thought and language and action of that which can never find

adequate outward expression—all this constitutes the growth of the collective mind of the Church. Those who stand apart from her may appropriate in some way the results of her vital activity, but they are not sharers of that activity. Torn from the living whole, some fragment of an idea may seem at first sight more intelligible and satisfactory than when cumbered with its vast and largely unintelligible context. But time and experience will prove that it has no vitality when severed from the organic unity to which it belongs. Heresies take some seemingly neglected fragment of the Christian conception, and, not content with giving it due emphasis, go on to treat it as an independent whole; and to reject the remainder from which it draws life. Only in the Church, collectively—not merely in her formulæ, which from time to time gather up and give expression to her growing self-consciousness; but in her corporate will-attitude, sentiment and action—is preserved the full faith of Peter in Christ the Son of the Living God. The results of independent speculation are perhaps at first sight more brilliant and rapid, but eventually are seen to be vitiated by some limitation of view against which there is no security but in patient waiting on the slow growth of the Catholic mind. In this sense we may say: *Extra Ecclesiam salus nulla:* There is no security outside the Church; and for this reason we hold on to her because we feel that she is being guided safely, surely, infallibly, into an ever fuller and clearer expression of her abiding faith in Christ.

From all this it follows that faith in the Church is merely an extension of faith in Christ the Son of the Living God. She is the medium in which, and together with which, He is revealed to us; if it is for His sake we accept her, it is through her that we are able to accept Him. Normally, there is no priority in these acceptances but simultaneity. And as these faiths in Christ and the Church agree in object, so also in kind. A clear, intellectual conception of the Church and of the rational basis of her claims is a necessity for the theologian and for the controversialist; but is not essential to a deep and living faith which often obtains where the other is absent or impossible. The uninstructed not only may and often do lack a coherent idea of the Church, but may also pick up and repeat and even think things quite inconsistent with the truth; just as a child might have most incorrect ideas as to grounds of the obedience and affection due to its mother. But in both cases it is the practical attitude of the whole soul, of the will and the affections, that is the true substance and profession of faith.[1]

In the case of the instructed or the instructable whose reflex thought reacts upon their will and affections, a false mental conception is full of danger, and for this reason the intellectual expression or equivalent of faith needs to be safeguarded

[1] Cf., "A weaver who finds hard words in his hymn-book, knows nothing of abstractions; as the little child knows nothing of parental love, but only knows one face and one lap towards which it stretches its arms for refuge and nurture." (G. Eliot's *Silas Marner.*)

by authority; but for the simple this danger is minimized. We must not then suppose that because the words of the Creed sometimes answer to no clear and coherent concept of the mind, they are therefore mere words and correspond to no inward spiritual reality.

Nor again must it be thought that this inward faith is necessarily a living faith, fruitful in obedience and good works. The child may feel and yet rebel against parental authority; and there is as much faith involved in this disobedience as there would be in obedience. And so, too, ignorant people may not only think ignorantly or wrongly about the Church; but may also set her authority at defiance, and yet have a deep and firm faith in their spiritual mother.

XXVII.

THE VOICE OF THE MULTITUDE.

The voice of His words was as the voice of a multitude.—Dan. x. 6.

Vox populi vox Dei—the voice of the people is the voice of God—not of the mob, or of the populace, but of the people. The amount of mingled truth and falsehood in this principle makes it most difficult to appraise. The judgment of the entire multitude will not be vitiated by the prejudices and interests peculiar to any one section thereof, and in this way personal and class errors are eliminated. On the other hand, the judgments in which all agree represent the most general and

therefore the lowest stage of intellectual and moral development, and are for that reason the most inadequate and misleading. But against this it must be said that two heads are better than one, in as far as the experience of the wisest is narrow, and needs to be supplemented by that of others; and even his sagacity in dealing with experience is often one-sided, unless it be stimulated by the doubts and questionings, the solutions and hypotheses, suggested by other brains. Perhaps then it is the wisdom of the few, criticizing and judging the expressed opinion of the many, that should be considered the voice of the people and the voice of God. This is what the constitution of Catholic Christianity seems to suppose. The "deposit" of Christ's revelation lies in the mind of the Church at large. But what is this seeming abstraction which we call "the mind of the Church"? It cannot be supposed that in the mind of the deepest theologian or most enlightened saint of this present, or of any other age of Christianity, the whole idea of Christ's religion has existed in its perfect purity and full development. Nor again that the points which are clear to all or to the great majority of Christians would represent any but the least developed and most imperfect conception of the same. It is as though we were to look for a complete account of the recent war in its unity and detail from a single officer, or still more absurdly, to accept that average account, on which all the men in the ranks should agree. Plainly no one mind has the whole idea; but like an organism

which can be reintegrated from any one part, it is radically or seminally in every mind, perfectly in none, and similarly, in no two alike. One sees one side of its development; another, another; a third, a third; and by mutual conference and comparison they can all together build up a fuller conception than any one of them separately would have attained to; while those positive errors and false developments, inseparable from isolated and inadequate views of reality, are recognized and cast out. So it is with the idea of Christianity, in itself one and simple, though necessarily broken up in order to be digested by our manifold mind. No single mind in any age seizes more than a broken fragment of its living substance, but by conference and comparison these fragments are pieced together into larger but still fragmentary units; so that the voice of the Council, of the Christian people, is the voice of God. Further, the voice of many ages is for the same reason more divine, more truly the *vox Dei*, than the voice of one; and no single age was less capable of interpreting the apostolic revelation than that which first entered on the task.

Nothing argues better for the need of a world-wide perpetual institution with a sort of corporate consciousness of its total experience, present and past, than the fact of the hopeless insufficiency of the isolated mind; or even of the isolated community of minds. We are unable to concentrate our attention on one side of the truth, without losing account of the other; and to diffuse it equally over the whole area of our limited experience

would be to penetrate no part deeply, and to ensure an universal fogginess of apprehension. As in practical matters, so even in intellectual, there can be no intensity without narrowness. Hence we need to co-operate by division of labour and to supplement one another's narrownesses. And the like holds good of different ages and countries, each of which lays emphasis on some one truth to the neglect of another equally important. The Catholic ideal—however far from realization—is to bind together the ages and races; and to superimpose mind upon mind, so that the faults in one may be covered by the fulness in another; to bring into one corporate consciousness the gathered fragments of Heavenly Bread, that nothing be lost.

XXVIII.

NEED OF AUTHORITY.

But when He saw the multitude He was moved with compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.—Matt. ix. 36.

As to the faith of simple folk, the problem will have to be solved eventually by a distinction between *causes* of belief, and *reasons* of belief. Allowing that inferences may be rational, though informal and unconscious; and that the motives of belief are, in the case of many, justified continually on this score, yet it is hard to see how this can be maintained with regard to that section of the masses (large or small matters not) whose belief is in no conceivable sense formally rational; who, we know most certainly, would have been

Islamites or Sun-worshippers had their lot been cast among such; with whom, in a word, imitation, tradition, and education are everything; and criticism absolutely nothing. Even in regard to the most intelligent and educated, the limitations of the mind are such that, in all but a few matters, criticism of a fundamental nature is impossible; for this would mean a complete mastery of the subject. Our beliefs are mostly caused and determined by the *milieu* in which we chance to find ourselves, but are not (at least ultimately) based on reasoning, either implicit or explicit. Where the collective mind is divided against itself in these matters, there may be on our part a certain choice and selection of the authorities which we follow: but none the less it is the authority and not the intrinsic reasonableness which moves us to assent. Still more is this true of the illiterate in regard to nearly all their beliefs, which come to them (not without God's providence and grace) by way of heritage, and not by their proper industry. As it is no thanks to this one to have been bred up a Christian; so neither is it blame to that one to have been bred a pagan. The cause of belief in each case, is outside reason; is determining and not free. Only when doubt occurs is there a call for personal choice, and then, as in all other matters, prudence bids us not to criticize where we are not experts, but to be content with our heritage. Little short of miracle will in such cases excuse a departure from the only safe, though not infallible rule. The belief may not be right, but at present it may

be certainly right to stick to it; certainly wrong to open up the question.

When, as here and now, there is no longer any public unity of faith, profession, or practice, the great mass of those who depend on imitation and gregariousness for their belief are lost to religion. For them the trumpet of general agreement gives an uncertain sound, or rather, no sound at all; and therefore no man prepares for the battle. Where religion is public and respectable, many are held to the sources of light and grace who fall away from them as soon as they can do so with undamaged repute. It is shallow to say that they are better away, unless we are prepared to carry the principle much further. Children may go to school reluctantly and under compulsion, but they are taught none the less, and are glad in later life that pressure was used with them.

XXIX.

UNITY AND VARIETY.

For we, being many, are one bread and one body.—1 Cor. x. 17.

It was the birth-day of Catholicism in religion, and also the death-day of nationalism in religion, when the Holy Spirit, one and the same, found utterance in diverse tongues, when Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, strangers from Rome, Jews, Proselytes, Cretans and Arabs, all heard, each in his own tongue, one and the same gospel of the wonderful works of God.

For this is indeed the essential idea of Catholicism—unity in diversity; unity of truth in diversity of clothing;—a due respect to both these complementary principles of life and growth and health. Judaism had no vague, fluctuating creed; nor did she lack her daily magisterium, her authoritative teaching emanating from the Scribes and Pharisees —the degenerate, but none the less legitimate, successors of Moses and the Prophets. But what she gained in unity and solidity she lost in diversity and flexibility; nationalism was of her very essence, and if she dreamt of world-wide dominion over souls, it was to be accomplished by the absorption and destruction of other nationalities, by the subjection of the Gentiles, not merely to Jewish faith, but to Jewish form and language and expression; by the establishment of a dead mechanical uniformity, and not of a vital "sameness-in-diversity;" in a word, by the triumph of nationalism, and not by birth and growth of Catholicism.

It was not merely a new and fuller revelation of divine truth that was communicated to mankind on the day of Pentecost; for such a treasure might have still been left in the hands of the Synagogue; but a new method was inaugurated, a new machinery was devised for the spread of revelation,—new skins, in fact, for the young wine of the Gospel.

A balance between two contrary and complementary principles is always a difficult task for the feebleness of the human mind, which finds extreme positions so much simpler to understand, and so much easier to maintain. He is a skilled seaman

who can keep mid-deck when the vessel is rolling from side to side; and when passengers have to cling hard to the bulwarks on one side or the other; they care little which. And if we watch the growth of our mind in regard to any problem on which we think independently, we shall find that, it is only after oscillations from one extreme to another that we gained strength to balance ourselves—very much as children learn to stand and walk after tumbling about in all directions. And so it is with the mind of the whole race which God is educating "at sundry times and in divers manners;" in times past by the Prophets, in these latter days by His Son, and His Spirit. Unity in the sense of rigid mechanical uniformity, they can understand; it is a simple and an easy position, not calling for mental comprehensiveness and delicacy of adjustment. And similarly diversity, chaotic license, is intelligible to the feeblest mediocrity. But to save unity in diversity; and diversity in unity; to escape the narrow intolerance of Judaism on the one side; and flaccid indifferentism on the other, is the secret and strength of Christianity.

In regard to this very conception, as much as in regard to any part of the Creed, we must recognize a certain growth in the mind of the Christian Church; for, as we have said, the conception is not an easy one, like either of the extremes which it repudiates; and the respective confines of lawful diversity and obligatory unity are not discerned in a moment. Hence we find St. Paul in more than one passage insisting, now upon the

importance of unity of spirit, of faith, of sacrament, of government; and then on the no less importance of diversity of manifestation, of function, of expression, of language.

For indeed the flexibility and mobility of the body, the multitude and diversity of its members and organs, far from being hostile to the unity of the quickening spirit is the very condition of that unity. In the body and its parts and functions, the spirit unfolds and reveals its hidden power and excellence, and this revelation is more complete as the range of circumstances to which the body adapts itself is wider and more various. The spirit which animates the Church of Christ, has already in these few centuries of her existence, shown herself identical, at least in tendency, with that spirit of wisdom which the Scripture describes as "understanding, holy, one, manifold, subtile, active, quick, which nothing hindereth, having all power, overseeing all things, and containing all spirits."[1] Yet it may well be that but an inconsiderable fraction of the tale is told; and that the changes in culture, in art, in science, in social and political relations, already in rapid progress and whose final issue is to us quite unimaginable, may disclose to posterity aspects and latent powers of the Spirit of Christianity undreamt of by us.

But in every living organism or society the difficulty is, to check the self-assertive, narrow-minded egotistic tendency of each part and member; its tendency to insist that every other part shall be

[1] Wisdom vii. 22, 23.

fashioned like to itself; and shall function in the same way. Our first uncorrected impulse is always to wonder why others are not as we are; why they do not see as we see, and do as we do; to resent this liberty of theirs, and to force ourselves upon them as a seal or mould whose shape they must take. And this tendency is observable even in those larger and more complex parts, whereof the Church's continuity in time and place is made up; in the attitude of nation towards nation; and of one age and generation towards another; each will have its own peculiar expression of the Catholic religion to be the full and adequate and only possible expression, from which none can depart without falling into error, by way of excess or defect; each will impose itself and its ways as a rule upon all the rest; each would substitute a national for a Catholic religion, a religion of one age for a religion of all ages. Now it is the Latin races that would make their peculiar form of Catholicism the universal type; now the Anglo-Saxon; while each particular century looks patronizingly on former times, or perhaps while indignantly chafing under inherited responsibilities, tries itself to fetter posterity by laws and regulations that a decade may prove unworkable and mischievous.

Thus it is that the idea and principle of Catholicism has hard work to assert itself against the littleness and narrowness of man's mind and affections; yet slowly it seems to struggle into clearer recognition as time after time the Church has been forced to bear witness to that truth which

is so much greater and better than any of its exponents. While then the religion of Christ is neither Italian, nor English, nor American; neither primitive nor mediæval nor modern; yet it finds legitimate and distinct, though always inadequate, expression in all these divers forms and languages; and it were as grave a departure from Catholicism to suppress or distrust the diversity of form, as to deny the unity of faith.

Yet there are minds which see no distinction between blank, fruitless uniformity, and that fruitful unity-in-variety which is the characteristic of life. With them St. Paul remonstrates, saying: "The body is not one member but many: if the eye were the whole body, where would the hearing be? If hearing were the whole, where would the sense of smell be?" Were the whole Church Latinized, what would become of the Teutons; were it Europeanized, what of the Orientals and the Americans? Were it essentially primitive or mediæval or modern, what of posterity?

This is obvious to state, yet it is repugnant to the first and strongest instinct of the individual part or member—to the instinct of selfishness; and with that selfish instinct, God's Catholic spirit struggles slowly and laboriously. Even the best of us find it easier to live by rule than by principle; by the letter, than by the spirit; for a rule is inflexible and is applied blindly to each case; whereas a principle is vital and flexible and needs to be adapted each time, at the cost of thought and reflection. And similarly it is much easier to make

a common rule in indifferent things and impose it upon all nationalities alike, than to take thought for each nationality in particular, and to study its temper and language, its peculiar needs and circumstances. Yet we may hope that things are gradually working that way; and that the rough-and-ready expedients of centralization may slowly give place to a more delicate and vital system of government in things pertaining, not to the unity of spirit, but to the diversity of embodiment. The attempt to preserve life by petrifying its bodily habitation and thereby destroying the essential condition of its vigorous exercise bespeaks a zeal not altogether according to knowledge.

XXX.

THE BOND OF PROFESSION.

We being many are one Bread.—1 Cor. x. 17.

Not merely bread, but bread shared in common is the essential symbolism of the Eucharist. It is not a solitary meal, but a banquet or sacrificial feast. Nor is each celebration a repetition of a similar banquet; but all celebrations from first to last are administrations of one and the same banquet whereat all ages and nations sit down to meat. Nor do I communicate as a solitary individual, but as an organ of the whole mystical body which is fed in my person. Nor am I strengthened sacramentally in myself alone, but the bands and ligatures by which I am connected with the whole organism are multiplied and tightened. The Eucharist strengthens us by combining us, as frail

strands are twisted into tough cords. In the natural order we are absolutely dependent on our membership with surrounding society for our very existence, our life, action, thought and speech. In society we live, move, and have our being. We borrow almost everything; we originate almost nothing. By intercourse with others, our dormant faculties are wakened, formed, and guided. Likewise membership with ecclesiastical society is the essential condition of our religious birth and evolution; tied to the Church we are strong, severed from her we are weak. Both in matters of belief and of conduct, our gregarious instinct is what determines many of us altogether; most of us in most things. Before we have come to any sort of power of independent reason we are already formed almost beyond possible reform, by the *milieu* into which we have been born. Even when we begin to reason and criticize, it is always on assumptions given us by tradition, nor could even a Descartes wholly divest himself of all such. Absolute independence of thought is as impossible as absolute independence of action. Faulty and erroneous as the public standards of belief and practice may be, we must perforce, and we ought to, trust them and be swayed by them except where we are competent to criticize and resist them. They are the natural provision for creatures as imperfect as we are. It is hard to stick to the truth in the face of a contradictory consensus; hard to be honest and upright in the midst of rogues. But the majority, who would be too

weak to stand up for truth and justice, alone and opposed, are supported by a healthy public opinion and practice; while the still more servile are, in some sense, coerced and restrained by social influence which serves them in lieu of conscience. As one who has not yet learnt to swim, or even the weak or wearied swimmer, is buoyed up by a belt of corks, so those whose faith and character is unformed or imperfect need the support of social influence, which the Church affords them all the more as representing the public opinion, not merely of a locality, or a generation; but of all Christendom from the beginning; and as claiming a divine and infallible guidance. It would need no ordinary independence of mind for one who had ever come under such an influence, to shake off the spell.

But here the difference between direct experience and mere inference or hearsay is very marked. A few Christians scattered in a non-Christian country will fail to realize, what they know theoretically about the antiquity and comparative universality of their religion, and the helpful influence of that knowledge will be weakened or destroyed; whereas in a Christian country the mere hearsay knowledge of the existence of other creeds will do less harm than logic might seem to warrant. Of course this support and supplement of faith must no more be confounded with faith itself, than the strength of a crutch with that of the ailing limb it supports though naturally few distinguish between what their firmness in faith owes to tradition, education, and example and what it owes to a free, intelligent

self-determination of their will. If to live in a Christian *milieu* is a grace for the majority, who are weak; a non-Christian *milieu* may in some ways be helpful to the few who are strong and independent; and it is from such minorities that we should look for vigorous movements of religious renaissance rather than from lands where facilities of faith and practice have led to a luxuriant but enfeebled outgrowth.

Still in alien surroundings, "by the waters of Babylon," it is more needful to "remember Sion"—to insist on external acts of reunion with the body of the Church, chief of which is the use of the Eucharist; and this, in order to *realize* what we know, *sc.*, that we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses to the truth of our faith; that we are in communion not only with every assembly throughout the world where this Bread is broken, but with the generations past and future which have been or shall be our fellow-guests at this banquet. Hence the wisdom with which the Church insists, not only on a certain substantial sameness of the outward rite, irrespective of national and local differences; but also on the reverent preservation of forms and ceremonies whose original significance is lost in antiquity, but whose present significance lies in the fact that they link us to the remote past, and waken in us that historic sense to which Catholic worship, as distinguished from its most accurate imitations, alone appeals. "As our fathers did, so also do we;" for that reason alone, if for no other.

XXXI.

SACRAMENTS.

Do this for a remembrance of Me.—Luke xxii.

It is needful to insist so much upon the deeper and more mysterious aspects of religious dogmas and institutions—upon those in regard to which faith needs to be continually fortified against reason—that the simpler aspects are in danger at times of being overlooked and forgotten, not without some considerable loss to the interests of the mind and heart. In the face of denial we lay such stress on the points denied that we have none left for those that are admitted on both sides.

Thus besides the mysterious import of the Sacraments there is an import which is altogether natural and understandable, and which ought not to be overlooked, though in some sense its value may be like that of candle by daylight.

There is a perfectly understandable sense in which Christ still lives on earth in the Church which He instituted and which is the lineal descendant of the little group of faithful, if frail, disciples who stood by Him in His temptations. So far as, and when, she speaks the words that He commissioned her to speak, it is His voice that we hear; and what she does by His deputation, is done by Him. It is He who baptizes, feeds, anoints, blesses; it is His hand that is laid upon us to strengthen and ordain. We, in receiving these sacraments, take Him as our God; He, in con-

ferring them, takes us for His people and the sheep of His pasture. What idea could be simpler, or commend itself more readily to human modes of thought and symbolism! And yet to those who reflect, how infinite, even under this aspect, is the dignity and solemnity of these rites wherein the soul makes her act of homage to Christ as her God! It is strange that those who see thus much in the Christian sacraments, even though they see no more, should find anything excessive in the accessory solemnities and ceremonies with which the Catholic tradition has wisely emphasized the profound significance of these rites and guarded them against the profanation of light and careless handling, — ever sedulously preserving their character of an unchangeable bond of union binding the most various peoples and ages to one another and to Christ. For through them Christ is made virtually present over the whole face of the earth, reaching out His saving hand across the centuries, wheresoever the Church shoots forth her branches and spreads her cool leaves for the healing of the nations. All the wealth of Catholic ritual is but too poor a language to convey adequately this fragmentary aspect of the sacraments to eye and ear and heart; and the puritanism which has swept it all away, has thereby buried the lesser and natural, as well as the deeper and supernatural, conception of the sacraments from public consciousness.

Especially does this seem true of the Blessed Sacrament which viewed even in its merely natural

aspect, as a memorial of Christ's leave-taking of His friends, would seem to deserve a far greater importance than is accorded it by those who regard it as nothing more. In Eastern symbolism the breaking of bread with another is a profession of unanimity and fidelity almost equivalent to an oath or vow—a fact which lent a deeper dye to the treachery of Judas. To break bread with Him whom we believe to be the Son of God, and with those who share the same belief, is surely as grave an undertaking as the most solemn and compromising vow could possibly be. No military oath binds a man to so absolute a service and fidelity to his leader as this bread-breaking pledges us to in regard to Christ. On this score alone the veriest Zwinglian might well "examine himself and so eat of that bread" as one who discerns the Lord's body from any mere love-feast of Christian brotherhood.

But it is more than a bread-breaking; it is at least a symbolizing and calling to mind of that Love which was carried to the extremity of death —to the rending of the body and the pouring out of the blood. Not a memorial devised later by His grateful followers, but one instituted by Himself on the night before He suffered, when His heart was full of His friends,—past, present, and to come—of the "you" and the "many" for whom His blood was to be shed; instituted, because He wanted to be remembered by men more than men, frail and forgetful of love, would ever want to remember Him. To partake is therefore to remember, to acknow-

ledge and to accept that extravagance of Divine love: and to return the embrace with all the power and devotion of our soul.

And without penetrating the veil of the inmost mystery, we can understand, in some way, that it is not only a remembering but a feeding upon Christ crucified: that as our bodies are nourished by bread and wine so our souls are mystically stengthened in the duly received sacrament in virtue of the rent body and outpoured blood of Christ; nor is this belief in a "virtual" presence tied up in any way to the further mystery of the real presence.

Once more, in its public aspect, the celebration of this rite is a true setting forth or announcing of the Lord's death in the eyes of Heaven no less than in the eyes of men; it is, at least, a solemn pleading of the sacrifice of the Cross, even were it not also a sacrificial pleading.

How then is it possible for those who admit so much as this, to consider that the central place, the external reverence and solemnity assigned to this rite in Divine worship by the Catholic tradition is in any way excessive? Quite independently of the doctrine of the Real Presence, the Blessed Eucharist claims all this honour and much more. Nay, the reverence shown to the sacred elements as reserved for the sick or as exposed upon the altar for veneration, taken as relative and not absolute worship, would be most natural and fitting on the part of those who hold even the least that could be held by any Christian in the way of Eucharistic doctrine.

Those who hold to the fulness of the Catholic tradition would do well to dwell occasionally on these less mysterious aspects of the Blessed Sacrament which offer so solid and independent a basis for their devotion and reverence. At times the mystery of the Presence is too great and overwhelming to be helpful; we believe but cannot realize it or cope with it; whence a sort of stupefaction and deadness. In such states it were well to descend from the rarefied atmosphere of the mountain-tops and breathe the air of our native plains; to feed our soul on food that is commoner and less choice, but more easily assimilated by our weak apprehension.

Sometimes it happens that souls are troubled in approaching the altar, not by any doubt as to their moral dispositions, but by what they imagine must be temptations against faith in the real presence of Christ's Body; yet it is not their faith that wavers, but only their apprehension of the theological explanation of the doctrine. They are trying to grasp with mental exactitude, and, still worse, trying to picture with their imagination, the meaning of

> Blood is poured, and Flesh is broken
> Yet in either wondrous token,
> Christ entire we know to be.[1]

And,

> Doubt not, but believe 'tis spoken,
> That each severed outward token
> Doth the very whole contain.

[1] Caro cibus, Sanguis potus:
Manet tamen Christus totus
Sub utraque specie.

Naught the precious gift divideth,
Breaking but the sign betideth,
Jesus still the same abideth,
Still unbroken doth remain.[1]

It is rightly contended that if "This is My Body" is to be taken literally and not figuratively, there is no evading the above doctrinal implications. By them alone can the letter of Christ's words be saved in its plain directness.

It is also contended that the simple folk who heard these words must have taken them literally.

But it cannot possibly be contended that they also explicitly recognized all the above metaphysical corollaries of the truth. Indeed the first impression derived from the literal acceptation would not be consistent with theological accuracy; for to the simple bystander the broken bread would correspond, part by part, to the broken Body; and the outpoured wine similarly to the outpoured Blood; he would assume that *signum* and *signatum*, the veil and the thing veiled, were rent by one and the same act.

What then shall we say of the simple faith of those millions of Catholic Christians who profess to take these words literally and yet are mentally incapable of understanding even the theological

[1] Ne vacilles sed memento
Tantum esse sub fragmento
Quantum toto tegitur.
Nulla rei fit scissura;
Signi tantum fit fractura;
Qua nec status, nec statura
Signati minuitur.

statement of the Real Presence; who if they try to understand it, are almost sure to misunderstand it, and to confuse their ideas by the very effort to make them clear? Is the brightness of their faith in any way tarnished by the mists of their understanding?

The answer is to be found in what has already been said as to the dogma of Christ's divinity. Words that correspond to no clear or correct idea in the mere mind, can correspond to some internal realization of the whole soul. The mental idea evoked by the words: "This is My Body" is of secondary value compared with the practical response of the heart and will and affections by which the soul adjusts itself to its belief and by treating it as a fact—as an element of the world of reality to which its action has to be adapted—gives it a substance and verity that it may often lack where the mental idea is clear and well-defined. Just then as faith in Christ's Godhead means principally to treat with Him as with God; so faith in the Eucharistic Presence means to treat with Him as there present. The mental conception of the mode of union in the one case, and of the mode of presence in the other, is of consequence to the theologian, or to those who seek an intellectual explanation of the conviction of Faith; but is, at most, secondary to such conviction.

Those therefore who are puzzled and perplexed by these conceptions and explanations; whose devotion is chilled and whose faith is troubled by the persistent rebellion of their mind, would

do well to distinguish between the obligation of practical acknowledgment, internal and external, and the obligation of theologically correct apprehension. The former is absolute and for all; the latter is only for some, and as far as possible. We can be obliged to believe, but not to understand; the former is in our power, but not the latter. To believe a truth is to make it a reality for our practical life; to allow for it, as for a fact, in all our actions interior and exterior.

XXXII.

THE MUSTARD-SEED.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed. —Matt. xiii. 31.

Organic growth, whether of plant or animal but more especially in the case of the higher animals, is characterized by a sort of backward process, as though what is last should have been first; and what first, last. There is throughout an anticipation of, and preparing for what is to come; and much that is at the time unmeaning and aimless finds its justification fully but only in the finished work. It is chiefly as an organic growth that the Catholic religion is seen to be from the God of Nature; it is because what was aimless and unmeaning in her earlier history is seen in the light of later development to have been preparatory to purposes then beyond human conjecture; it is because the words of Christ and His Apostles receive fuller explanation and deeper significance by what would seem

the undesigned course of events, that we recognize an organic unity not merely in the present structure of the Church, considered statically, but in the secular process of growth from earliest times, from the first planting of the mustard-seed up to the present day. In history we see the process at work—unity, dissension, selection, reintegration—repeated over and over again; each time giving us a new definition and a new heresy. We see the human mind struggling, not unguided, to find an ever less inadequate formula for a world of spiritual realities that must ever exceed its grasp and burst through its straining fingers. As the mind grows it becomes always more conscious of the inadequacy of its former attempts, and tries its new strength in the same direction; but from the nature of the case the task is endless. It is, however, only on the supposition, that the whole process no less than its initiation is the work of the same Divine Spirit, that it is possible to accept as identical two results so widely different, at first sight, as the germ and the well-grown organism—the simple religion of Christ and the complex system of modern Christianity; the former pure and unmixed with the corrupt mass it had to redeem—with the world of human sin and error, of those beliefs, speculations, traditions, customs, laws by which life is governed; the latter mingled with it, partly conquering, partly withstood by it, as yet far from triumphant and but feebly militant.

XXXIII.

VERITAS PRÆVALEBIT.

Every plant that My Father hath not planted shall be uprooted. —Matt. xv. 13.

Nothing, however robust to the outer eye, can finally endure, which defies any law of morality or of right reason. "Let them alone," says Gamaliel, "for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God ye will not be able to withstand them, lest haply ye be found to be fighting against God." (Acts v. 28.) Where decay lurks in any corner, it will quietly work its way to the uttermost in God's good time and manner, and from the very corruption He will build up life, wasting no particle of the *débris*. There may be much unwisdom and short-sightedness in our expeditious cremation methods. We are impatient to see reform within the compass of our own short day: "Give peace in our time, O Lord!" This is a natural though a presumptuous longing, which characterizes every prophet and lover of God's glory; "My eyes have failed looking for Thy salvation, saying: When wilt Thou comfort me?" In Simeon's case the longing was gratified: "My eyes have seen Thy salvation;" but for most, patient faith in a dimly foreseen future is their only consolation. As our ways would seem not only infinitely mysterious but also infinitely slow to some creature whose century was a brief second; so to us God's æonian movements seem like perfect stillness, and

inactivity,—imperceptible yet irresistible as the crawling advance of the glacier crushing its way on through every obstacle—"A thousand years are with the Lord as but one day." Often it were better to "await in silence the salvation of God," to let the lie rot away through its own corruption, than to hasten the process by artificial and short-sighted methods. The evil we so check and abbreviate may have been the rich fostering soil from which a whole harvest of glory was to sprout forth. Haste, like economy, has no value in God's eyes, who is as prodigal of time as of His other bounties. He loves that indirect and lengthy method of self-justification, which logic knows as the *reductio ad absurdum;* that is, He lets evils run their suicidal course and yield their full fruits of death that He may be justified in His saying, and victorious when brought to judgment.

XXXIV.

THE HERETICAL FALLACY.

The eye cannot say to the hand: I need not thy help; nor again, the head to the feet: I have no need of you. Yea, much more; those that seem to be the more feeble members of the body, are more necessary.—1 Cor. xii. 21, 22.

Heresy is intellectual schism; it is a rending asunder of the seamless coat of divine truth, a pulling to pieces of the living organic whole of Christian belief. No severed limb can retain life in itself but must decay and drop to pieces. Nor is any part self-explanatory or comprehensible except in living connection with the whole. This is the danger inseparable from analytical reasoning

and the pregnant source of every heresy. The Trinity, the Creation, the Incarnation, the Church, the Eucharist, the Communion of Saints, are none of them definable apart from the rest; though for method's sake they must be treated as independent wholes.

Further, the idea of Christianity must grow as one thing; and the hasty development of one member in advance of the rest would mean distortion and monstrosity in the issue. Until we know what the whole is going to be, we have no guide as to what its several parts should be; and we may force their growth in a wrong direction. The desire to make some one dogma or principle supreme and central, to the detrusion of the others, is the usual motive of heresy; just as in science or philosophy, every newly observed law is treated by its discoverer as all-pervading and fundamental until the attempt to prove it so demonstrates its partial and hypothetical character. The neglect of some particular aspect of the Christian idea eventually leads to its emphasis; and this, by force of reaction, tends to be exaggerated and excessive at first; so that most additions to the Creed have cost a heresy in their making.

Without being a heretic, one may have an heretical way of viewing doctrines; namely, by regarding them as separate and self-explanatory wholes, and forgetting that their meaning is like that of several words in a sentence, to be determined by the context and not by the dictionary. In the Church only does the Christian idea live and

grow in its entirety. Sects may tear off this or that fragment and give it the completeness and clearness of an independent system ; they may seem to hasten its growth and development; but in effect they comment on an abstraction—on a word out of context. In her possession and slow development of the whole Idea or Word, the Christian Church is the divinely appointed organ of that Spirit which in the course of time will teach her all things, and bring all to her mind that Christ said to her ere she was able to understand and bear the full sense. She is the pillar and ground of the Truth, and he who separates from her may seem to follow a quicker route, but in the end will be deceived. Not to analyze or dissect; nor to try to understand the separate parts of her dogma ; to take the Idea as a whole, as a treasure in earthen vessels, as eternal truth translated into forms and expressions all too narrow and unworthy ; not to attempt prematurely to sunder the ore from the gold; not to risk casting away what perhaps contains a precious and fruitful principle under some uncouth appearance of puerility or superstition—all this is the dictate of true faith and wisdom as contrasted with the analytical, logic-chopping spirit which in its love of meretricious clearness and brilliancy is close kin to the spirit of heresy. If the religion of the millions seems to us in many ways superstitious, let us remember that it represents the philosophy and enlightenment of an age not so long past ; and that before God the difference between the best and the worst of our gropings is not very significant.

XXXV.

PRIEST AND PROPHET.

This is My beloved Son; hear ye Him.—Mark ix. 6.

Not Moses, nor Elias; not the Law, nor the prophets, but Christ. The human mind comes to its rest in the centre of truth only after many decreasing oscillations first towards one extreme; then, towards its contrary. The right way, the pure truth, the perfect life, all are to be found in a certain difficult equipoise between two opposite tendencies to which the many find it easier to yield themselves passively. Hence Christ says that the way to eternal life is a narrow way, as it were, the ridge of a mountain that slopes down steeply on the right and on the left to certain destruction and death. And as it is of the nature of our imperfect mind to learn wisdom gradually by experience of unwisdom, so God in teaching us, adapts Himself to our nature—He sends us first Moses, then, by way of antithesis, Elias; then Christ, the synthesis. Moses and Elias; the Law and the prophets; the letter and the spirit—they are related as body and soul, the two elements into which the conception of our complete nature may be resolved; neither, of itself, sufficient without the other; neither to be despised without prejudice to the other; and yet the soul, principal, though not independent; and the body subordinate, though essential and inseparable. The latter is the principle of stability—*litera scripta manet*—it abides unchanged, and thereby

counteracts the volatile nature of the spirit which it incorporates and ties down to earth ; the spirit is the principle of that movement of perpetual self-adaptation and response to changing circumstance in which life consists—" It bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth." Apart from the embodying letter it is wayward and unaccountable, like other natural forces which are useless, or even destructive, until they are restrained by the fetters of some mechanism. If the letter without the spirit is dead and deadly ; the spirit without the letter is not life-giving—for lack of that which it should quicken. Every sort of human society, civil or ecclesiastical, lives and thrives by the fusion and balance of these two principles. If genius and inspiration be too liberally diffused, and institutions tampered with too lightly at the first suggestion of improvement, nor " Use and Wont " allowed their legitimate claim to reverence, we have the restless instability of France. If reverence for custom and routine pass into blind idolatry, we have the petrification of China. As no institution or social mechanism can create itself, so neither can it re-create itself or provide for its own renewal and reform ; all attempts at self-repairing machinery have failed. What the spirit alone can create and mould to its own use, that, the spirit alone can remould and adjust ; the body by its passivity can limit and restrain, but it cannot initiate.

The history of Israel shows us the law and the prophets, the letter and the spirit, as co-principles

of the public life in virtue of their "harmonious discord"—of their very conflict and opposition. As a French *penseur* has said: "*Et cette contradiction est une avantage, puisqu' elle est l'origine d'un conflit, d'un mouvement, et une condition de progrès. Toute vie est une lutte intérieure; toute lutte suppose deux forces contraires.*" (Amiel.) The ecclesiastical system, which the living spirit of the Law had created for its own embodiment and preservation, was, of its own nature, hostile to other manifestations of that very same spirit working through the mediation of prophets or other unofficial individuals. Its very office was to "try those spirits" whether they were of God; to oppose and thwart, rather than to foster and encourage. The same justice and unselfishness that would have enabled the priesthood to exercise this criticism of prophetic spirits with moderation, would have obviated the need of prophetic intervention. It was because the priesthood, like any other unopposed section of the social organism, tended naturally to arrogance and self-seeking that it needed the opposition or counter-balance of the prophetic office to keep it in its place—not, of course, in a state of unbroken equilibrium, but continually driven back within its own borders as often as it pushed itself forward unduly. For social forces, like those of physical nature, are blind and selfish, and would be immoral were they under the direction of a single personal will; and it is a fallacy to imagine that the sections and classes of a community can be subjected to a moral code that appeals only to free individual personalities. Of

such forces, no one will hold back modestly that another may have fair play, but each strives to assert itself without limit; and it is in virtue of this very aggressiveness that it serves the common good, checking and being checked in turn.

As the mind can rarely or ever seize one side of a truth without losing its hold on the other, so each class or section of a community considers that interest to which its own energy and attention are mainly devoted as alone of supreme and unlimited importance, before which all other interests must give way. That the several members of each such class should be animated by this egoistic, though impersonal, class-spirit, that the relative whole should thus dwell and act in each of its parts, is perfectly normal and irreprehensible. It is in each of them a lawful principle of action; but must not be the supreme and absolute guide. The sense of blind, instinctive, unreasoned opposition which the priest, as such, feels towards the prophet as such, and conversely, the prophet towards the priest, derives from the Universal Reason, like any other natural instinct of self-preservation, whereby each species maintains itself in the harmony of Nature.

But as a free personality, no man may blindly obey such impersonal and universal instincts as he finds within himself; each impulse has to be tried before the bar of reason and then to be used or denied, according to the verdict. The priest must hold in check his zeal for the *status quo*—for traditions, customs, prescriptions, institutions—for all that is meant by "the letter," that he may judge

just judgment, that he may discern the spirits whether they be of God, that he may not ascribe to Beelzebub the work of the Holy Ghost; and the prophet or reformer, must restrain his consuming ardour for the claims of the spirit against the letter, and give due heed to the Scribes and Pharisees that sit in the chair of Moses.

Let either class-instinct rage uncontrolled, and we have, on the one side, Jerusalem slaying the prophets and crucifying Christ and, like a body overcome by age from which the quickening spirit has departed, crumbling to destruction till not a stone is left upon another; and on the other side we have the reckless waste of divine energies, given for purposes of edification but turned to purposes of destruction—to the violent disintegration of existing institutions and traditions ere any proved and reliable substitute has been provided to take their place; whence, as inevitable a chaos as that which more slowly results from idolatrous letter-worship.

For, the priest who persecutes the prophet to-day will build up his sepulchre to-morrow; that is, will preserve his memory and the letter of his teaching to future generations, who else would be deprived of that transmitted spark of his inspiration which, however enfeebled in the process, may be enough to set some kindred spirit aflame, and so re-enforce his dwindling influence. Not in destroying the letter, but in modifying and completing it, so as to make of it a worthier embodiment and expression of itself—a home wherein it may dwell—does the spirit best provide for its own preservation and vitality. Only

so far as the conflict between letter and spirit, priest and prophet, tradition and inspiration, issues in some new adjustment of the social mechanism to altered circumstances, is it saved from being fruitless, if not positively mischievous, on one side and the other.

For the thoughts and the conduct of the great multitudes who form the passive element of society and for whose service the active few receive their gifts of initiative and originality, are shaped and governed by that great body of traditions, customs, laws, and beliefs, which constitute what might be called the public mind and will. Only so far as the prophet or the originator can mould that body for the better, will his work be diffused through the community and permeate to future generations; but to do so he has to overcome, not only its natural inertness, but the action and opposition of the priest or the official whose very function is to fight for the preservation of the *status quo*.

What is here exemplified by the conflict between priest and prophet in the Jewish theocracy, is plainly of universal application to every kind of society, civil and religious, since it draws its truth from the very structure of the human mind. Christ stands for that unattainable ideal towards which the endless effort of our alternations between Moses and Elias is directed. Now, we need to be recalled to the letter; now, to the spirit; we seem unable to love the one without despising the other; nor do we remember that each is good and needful in its measure; and Christ alone good without measure—

not Moses, nor Elias, but He who is the perfect synthesis of both—a synthesis towards which we may approximate but which we shall never attain in these finite conditions of untransfigured humanity.

Not even in the Christian Church do we escape from this law of conflicting forces in which its life is realized. The episcopate, the hierarchy, all the machinery of ecclesiasticism has for its function the preservation of the "Christ-Idea" committed to its charge, and the censorship of all developments and expansions of the same that may originate in the process of time; but it does not of itself initiate; its work is negative and not positive. History shows us that all substantial advance has been the work not of officials, but of individuals, almost in opposition to officials; not of the system, but of those who have to some extent corrected and modified the system. The great teachers of the Church have been the Fathers who, though often Bishops, were not as a class members of the *Ecclesia Docens*. Except St. Augustine, no one teacher has taught the Western Church more than St. Thomas Aquinas—not a member of its official teaching staff. To-day the beliefs of the faithful are *de facto* determined far more by unofficial individuals and by schools of theology than by the episcopate. Yet no other teaching but that of the episcopate is authoritative; and if it originates little or nothing, still its function of opposing, correcting, approving, and authorizing what is originated by others is essential to the vitality of dogma. And so also in matters of discipline and

practice, the function of Moses and Elias must be blended and balanced if we are to approximate to the ideal which is Christ the Way, the *Via Media*, and therefore the Truth and the Life—the Beloved Son in whom alone God is well pleased.

XXXVI.

CONVERSION.

Convert us, O God our Saviour.—Ps. lxxxiv. 5.

The notion of spiritual conversion has been somewhat appropriated and spoilt by revivalists of all sorts. It has come to suggest a strong and sudden gust of almost sensuous self-complacency, a thrilling sense of being saved and changed into something better—an hysterical mingling of sorrow and joy, tears and laughter. Also, "conversion" in the sense of a "serious turn" or a "serious call" from a certain thoughtlessness and lack of religious interest, is held by Evangelicals to be a *sine qua non* for all the elect. Moreover, if it be genuine conversion it is to be once and for all; there can be no relapse, no need of further conversion; the fact of apparent relapse would prove the conversion to have been unreal and hypocritical.

Freed from these perversions the term is needed for a very common fact or group of facts incident to the spiritual life.

Beside moral conversion, there is a "conversion" of the mind from error or ignorance, whether general, or in some particular matter. Or if not from error, it may be from "formalism," from a

dead, passive, and merely traditional acceptance of truths, to a living, active realization of them. Thus many men take their political views by tradition from their parents; they respect certain maxims and party-cries; they are even violent partisans, owing to the prejudice that does duty for judgment; but for many, a day comes when the mind is interested in some political problem; and forthwith the ferment of a new inner life, of a complete mental revolution aad reformation is set up; the old ready-made garments are cast away, and new ones fashioned to order.

A like "conversion" is common in regard to religion which often becomes, and very often remains, a theme of merely intellectual interest apart from any moral conversion; minds of a philosophical or argumentative turn, find in religion a boundless field wherein to expatiate, and this first waking to interest, in a matter previously uninteresting, is a sort of "conversion." Whether from error or formalism (particular or general), a mind-conversion may be slow and natural, or sudden and apparently supernatural; and the latter may be not without some accompanying emotional thrills which will make it more easily mistaken for a moral conversion. J. H. Newman exemplifies a slow "mind-conversion" from the imperfect germ to the perfect development of an idea. Never was he a "formalist" in religious questions, which seem always to have been his chief intellectual interest; nor does there seem to have been need of any notable "moral" conversion in his case; whether from evil

or from mechanism. On the other hand, Paul of Tarsus, a zealot and enthusiast for justice before his conversion, needed only a sudden flash of revelation to show him his error and to turn the fervid torrent of his energy into the right channel.

Of awakenings from partial or complete "formalism," we have abundant examples on every side. If we are not so now, we have most of us been parrots or word-mongers, in regard to some or all of the doctrines of our religion, during the earlier years of our life; and have needed some gradual or sudden "conversion" of our sluggish mind to a state of alert and intelligent interest.

"Moral" conversion means a turning round of the will either from wickedness, or from mechanism and routine, in regard either to the very foundations of our practical life, or to some particular line of conduct; and, in like manner, such conversion may be sudden as with Mary Magdalene, or slow as with St. Augustine. If sudden and also emotional, there is always a possibility of illusion. It may be that the soil is shallow and the response rapid and short-lived. More usually a reforming idea enters the mind noiselessly enough, and works as a leaven, gradually bringing the rest of the soul into agreement with itself; though sometimes a train has been laid silently and in the dark, to which but a chance spark need be applied to bring about what seems a sudden cataclysm.

Conversion from grievous sin, or misbelief, is not needed for all; though there are few who would not be the better of a conversion from formalism

and mechanism to a more vivid faith, a more fervent activity. Yet there are thousands of "the least in the kingdom of Heaven" whose spiritual life-pulse has ever been feeble; who have neither thought nor done grievously amiss; who have run obediently in established grooves without ever keenly realizing, and then freely rejecting, the possibility and the pleasure of doing otherwise;—without ever making their religion "their own" in the fullest sense. The multitude of these and of others, who, by God's grace, have kept their souls unspotted from the world makes some of our popular "acts of contrition" for past enormities, which would come well from the lips of a converted profligate or brigand, most unsuitable for promiscuous use. And the same may be said of certain highly-seasoned discourses and meditations on our past sins. The same strong diet can hardly agree with a worn-out *roué* and a convent-school girl. The *Miserere* was called forth by adultery and murder. Contrition or broken-heartedness for sin is not a fourth "theological virtue," and therefore needed for all; but only an *ex hypothesi* manifestation of faith, hope, and charity.

Conversion, were it only from formalism in regard to a belief, or from mechanism in regard to a practice, is not to be confounded with progress or uninterrupted advance from good to better. It is always an un-doing, a casting aside, a self-condemnation. As a boy outgrows his clothes, suit after suit must be cast aside, in spite of ingenious patchings and lettings-out; and similarly our religious ideas, practices, and methods are good pro-

visionally for a certain stage, but wear out and become relatively bad and hurtful. We need therefore a series of conversions, of those freer graces which, like fair weather, depend wholly on God's providence, and which we ourselves can determine only by prayer. It is just the failure of our ingenuity and reflection, the exhaustion of our energy, the deadening of our use-blunted stimulus, that bring us to a state of dryness where we can no longer help ourselves, but must sit down and wait for the reviving rain. Naturally these graces and visitings are more frequent and emphatic when we are growing rapidly from spiritual infancy to maturity; and later they become rarer and less revolutionary. Still we have ever need to pray daily for our daily bread: "Convert us, O God our Saviour, and turn away Thine anger from us." "All the days of my warfare I hope for my change. Thou shalt call me and I will answer Thee; Thou shalt stretch forth Thy right hand to Thy creature. For though Thou hast counted my footsteps, yet wilt Thou spare my sins; and though Thou hast sealed my crimes in a sack, yet wilt Thou cure me of my wickedness."

XXXVII.

ELECTION.

You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.—John xv. 16.

It is a strange, and not always a pleasing, experience to discover that others have been playing us like a fish, and that while we have fancied ourselves free and self-determining in the guidance of our life

and conduct, we have really been doing the will of another who knew how to manage us. Yet, in a sense, we have really been doing our own will all the way through.

But God's management of us is much more intimate and all-pervading than this. Never in the exercise of our free self-conscious life are we released from the magnetism of His influence upon our will. Nay, our whole mental and spiritual life consists in a continual commerce with Him—He offering us, according to laws we cannot regulate or control, new lights, new impulses, new energies, new desires; and we accepting or rejecting. He is as much a condition of our soul's life, as is the air, of our body's life. As the whole structure and nature of our lungs postulates the atmosphere from which we draw sustenance; so the whole structure and nature of our mind and will supposes that we are immersed in God, the ocean of truth and goodness, whose substance we build into our nothingness by the right use of our powers of free acceptance.

But whereas we need only open our mouth and draw in our breath when we would breathe, since the atmosphere presses on us necessarily and not freely; in our commerce with God another Will than our own intervenes. True, He ever stands at the door and knocks; yet He is not constrained to knock; nor does He bear the same message for all or at all times. He is ever offering us materials for the building up of our spiritual substance, light for our mind and fire for our heart; yet the selection

of them as to kind and measure rests with Him and not with us; just as in the circumstances of our outward life, our lots are in His hand, and He shapes our history more than we ourselves do. In our unreflecting years we seem to guide ourselves and walk where we will; but when we are older we see that it is another who guides us, and leads often whither we would not; that when we thought we were choosing Him, He was in reality choosing us. Strange, it is only when He has vanished from our sight that we remember how our hearts burnt within us as we walked with Him in the way; it is only in retrospect that we recognize how He has "managed" us all along, even in the days when we never gave Him a thought or scarce believed in Him at all. That we had squandered all the substance and reality of our life and had brought ourselves down to the dust—to desire the mere husks and appearances of reality—was in some sense the fruit of self-management; for we do not need God's help to destroy ourselves; we have but to reject His offers, and to refuse Him the ingress that He asks, and forthwith we wither away as grass in a drought, whose substance and bulk is a borrowed substance. We can always relax the tendrils by which we should cling to, spread ourselves over, and embrace more and more of the one Reality; we can always relapse into our own unsupported phenomenal existence. But to rise up again, or to wish to rise up, must be, and always is, given to us. He must choose to offer it, before we can choose to accept it. More than this, our very falling-away

has not evaded His providence in our regard, however it be counter to His immediate will; since "all things" even their very sins "work together for the good of them that love God."

In a word, God leads and we have to follow His lead. As Abraham went out from Ur of the Chaldees he knew not whither; so we know not, from any self-analysis, or from any attempted interpretation of our present conditions, what God has in store for us; what He is going to make of us. We know that an acorn will grow to an oak; that a child will grow to a man. These things are already made in the germ, and are not self-making. But our own moral and supernatural being is not contained in our nature, but is ministered from without, and built up by our free co-operation with that ministry. It is, from beginning to end, a matter of choice; first of His choice, then of ours.

XXXVIII.

CONFESSION.

Confess your sins one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed.—James v. 16.

Whether, designedly or not, the Roman form of general confession known as the *Confiteor* seems to condense in itself a whole theology of sin, of which the following points are worth noticing. It does not only say "I have sinned," but "I confess that I have sinned," implying a reflex consciousness of the nature and need of the act of confession. It is not easy to cry *Peccavi;* pride suppresses the cry,

and the word "I confess" expresses this reluctance which has been overcome by humility. The reluctance is natural and right; its absence is shamelessness, and lack of due self-reverence. If we blush for our sins in our heart, we shall blush to confess them. The fulness of every human act requires its outward embodiment in word or deed. It is not enough to believe in the heart, we must also profess the faith with our lips and lives; and so, of penitential sorrow. The word reacts upon the thought: "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves;" for by saying it often enough, by continual self-justification, we come to believe it. We can suffer no greater spiritual detriment than a forfeiture of the power of self-discernment; yet it is the inevitable result of insincerity and pretence—of acting a part, not necessarily before others, but even before ourselves in the theatre of our imagination. The madman fancies himself a king; but he differs from many a sane man only in that his illusion is quite involuntary. Instead of struggling to make ourselves better than we are and have been, we delight to dream that we have already apprehended and are already perfect. By perpetual posing before a lying mirror we come to forget, beyond hope of recovery, what manner of men we really are; and end in absolute self-puzzlement and loss of simplicity. Hence the healthy tonic effect of continual and simple acknowledgment of our faults and mistakes and defects. Half the hurt of sin is in the perversion of our moral judgment through the attempt of pride to justify sin. He

who spits out the venom promptly and says, "I was wrong altogether, wilfully and inexcusably," is already half-cured.

But what injures our spiritual nature, injures Him whose ideal and will is uttered in that nature. Sin is an offence, an injustice; man against God, judgment against judgment, will against will. Where wills collide, the heat of anger is generated; and anger is the energy which tends to make the thwarted will effectual over opposition. We conceive God more truly in conceiving Him thus humanwise, as one offended and angered by sin. When we have wrongly opposed another, confession is part of the reparation due to him; occult compensation, from the very fact that it saves our pride, can never fully satisfy the debt. Hence we have not paid our debt to God (as we are constrained to conceive Him), till we have confessed our sin by a special act of acknowledgment addressed to Him; nor will it do to rest passively in the thought that He knows all and needs not that we should tell Him. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us;" but as we ourselves are, so also is God irritated and angered by those who obstinately justify themselves — who never own themselves wrong. To those who confess frankly, honestly, promptly, He is all propitiable and forgiving. "I have sinned," says David; "The Lord hath taken away thy sin" is the instant response. In the same moment that we resolve upon confession, He runs forth to meet us, and to silence our lips with the kiss of peace.

"Against Thee only have I sinned," says David. But though it is only as a violation of the Divine will that the hurt we do to ourselves or to our neighbour puts on the character of sin; though it is only as representing God's will that any other will has a right over ours; yet God has so incorporated Himself with the whole Church of redeemed humanity in becoming the Head and Heart of that mystical organism, that confession is due not to Him alone but to that entire living body in union with which our salvation consists. By sin we always weaken, if we do not wholly sever, our vital connection with that "Tree of Life" through which alone we receive the quickening sap of God's grace. If we have lost our wedding garment we may not sit down to the Eucharistic Feast with "Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Blessed Michael the Archangel, Blessed John the Baptist, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul," and all the Saints in Heaven, and all the just on earth. They are identified mystically with God, against whom alone we have sinned; and to them we owe a debt of confession and sorrow. We confess not merely *before* them as before witnesses, but *to* them as to plaintives and accusers: "Confess your sins one to another and pray for one another that ye may be healed." Hence in the Roman form we confess (clergy and laity alike) not only to the Church in Heaven, to the Blessed Virgin, to the Angels, Patriarchs, Apostles, and Saints; but also to the visible Church on earth, the priest to the people, the people to the priest,—for all collectively and singly are injured by the sins of each. The

most secret thought against truth, or purity, or charity violates and disgraces that humanity which, however divided in its branches, is at root one and undivided. It is not I only who have sinned, but the whole body of mankind in me and through me, as through its organ and representative. And in like manner I come before God, laden not merely with my personal sins but with those of the millions of past and present humanity with whom I am so intimately identified: for thus it is that Christ made our sins His own, and His justice ours; thus it was that He, the spotless, would pray, even as He taught us sinners to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses." The deeper this truth enters our soul the less shall we be in danger of Pharisaism (or "separatism," as the word means), of the spirit of those who gather in their garments from contact with sinners, and thank God they are not as others, forgetting their identity with, and their responsibility for, those others.

The matter for confession being our sinful acts and omissions in respect to thought, word, and deed, we are taught very emphatically to put aside all self-deceiving attempts at palliation; to ascribe the disorderly act not to ignorance or to violence or to any sort of determinism or fatality, but to our own free choice as the true and ultimate determining cause. Doubtless there is much, far more than is commonly allowed, in our faulty conduct, both inward and outward, which is necessitated; but so far as there is matter for confession there must be some residue of culpability; something

which we really knew was wrong; really knew we could have avoided; and yet did not avoid.

If such a confession is honest and humbling, it is also stimulating and encouraging. A false conviction that we cannot help sinning, that we can be snared or forced into it against our wish, unnerves our effort, destroys our liberty, and creates the necessity by dreaming of it. It is here especially that humility and honesty, as opposed to insincere self-justification, is so invigorating and healthful. Those *idées fixes* as to the pleasures of sin, the painfulness of moral cleanness, the necessity of falling, the impossibility of resisting, and a host of other disastrous illusions, are natural sequels of sin which nothing but confession and honest self-facing can remedy.

The remainder of the form is founded on the precept: "Pray for one another that ye may be healed." Having confessed the sins which tend to exclude us from the communion of the just in Heaven and on Earth, we ask those just ones to pray for our restoration to unity. In earlier days confession was chiefly of this public kind; and had relation to those sins which were called mortal or "unto death," because they cut the soul off from the visible communion of the faithful, and from the propitiatory sacrificial banquet. And since visible union with the Church was, for those who knew, a condition of divine favour, whoever refused to seek readmission to her communion could not hope for God's grace ("He who heareth you heareth Me," and "Whatsoever ye bind on earth it shall be bound

in heaven"). Absolution is therefore an authoritative restoration to full ecclesiastical communion, to a seat at the Eucharistic banquet. Without it one cannot, in ordinary circumstances, be restored to Divine grace; though without interior contrition for sin, the mere readmission to communion is worse than of no avail before God. It were to lie to God and not unto men; to eat and drink not discerning the Lord's Body.

XXXIX.

FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

Where sin abounded Grace did much more abound.—Rom. v. 20.

There is something strong and stimulating, albeit at times disheartening, in the notion of the irreparable character of moral evil, of the eternal punishment of loss consequent not only on grievous sin but on the smallest infidelity to grace and to opportunities that pass, never to return; in the notion that the very saints in bliss are subject to a just doom which for ever shuts them out from a higher bliss forfeited by their wilful negligence. What human lover would not be pained, not only by the remembrance of his past infidelities, but still more by the thought that but for them his present love might have been more than it is? But is it really true that Heaven itself can thus be seasoned with Hell's bitterest flavouring? that the elect are but the remnants and ruins of what they might have been had they never needed repentance? that their glory is but the residue of a series of irrevocable subtractions, betrayals, birth-right sellings?

that even if the returning prodigal sits higher than his brother that went not astray, yet he can never sit so high as had he never left the home of his childhood?

Were the blessed, at some Lethean spring, to drink away the remembrance of such saddening thoughts, yet the eternal loss would remain though their sense of it were gone: nor should we care to think that our future joy in the vision of Truth were thus to depend on a blinding illusion or on defective self-knowledge, or that when time shall be no more, and the past shall be as the present, we shall not be able to face that risen and reinstated past in all its details, with unruffled serenity. If here illusions are to some extent the wraps and mufflings which save us from perishing through the chill of life's cruel realities; if we are forced to shut our eyes to irremediable horrors and to live in a little garden of roses walled in by our imagination, lest, stricken down by fruitless sorrow and despair, we should lose that hopeful energy in well-doing which can only be secured by a certain narrowness of vision; yet "when that which is perfect is come" the economies needed for the time of imperfection and spiritual childhood shall be done away.

Shall we then evade the difficulty by pressing to their utmost the words: "All things work together for the good of them that love God"—as meaning that "all things," even our very sins by which we have fallen from love, become graces and helps in the moment that we are restored to love; that God's creative power, which brings, not only being

from nothingness, but good out of and by means of permitted evil, uses our past sins as the sacraments of our sanctification, so that the forgiven soul may always cry: *O Felix Culpa!*—O Blessed Sin that called forth so great a wealth of pitying grace and found so liberal and superabundant a redemption?

Nay, do we not feel intuitively, are we not meant to feel, that Peter and Paul and Augustine and many another penitent Saint was sanctified not only in spite of, but because of and through his sins; that had he not fallen so low he had never risen so high?

If then sin be the fuel that feeds the brightest flame of God's love, if it be the web from which He weaves the first robe of grace reserved for the younger son and denied to the elder; if it be the gossamer on which He threads the flashing jewels of His mercy, what then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

> Oh, if we held the doctrine sound
> For life outliving hearts of youth
> Yet who would preach it as a truth
> To those who eddy round and round?

Yet if we deny such mercy to God, lest a doctrine so easily abused should be decadent rather than stimulating in its general effect, how can we stop short of the gloomiest tenets of Calvinism or Montanism? If God forgave but once in a life-time and not seventy times seven; or, if each time, with a greatly increased reluctance, would men, taken in the gross, sin as lightly as they do? Is there not a wide-spread unconscious presuming on God's mercy

for which Christianity is largely responsible, and which contrasts unfavourably with the dread of relentless Nemesis, with the sense of the eternal irreparability of sin, fostered, not only by the merciless religions of old, but by that equally merciless positivism of our own days which throws the hopelessness of a scientific necessity into the doom: "Be sure your sin will find you out;" and offers no place for repentance even though it be sought with tears? Let me ask myself frankly: "Would I have sinned on this or that given occasion had I believed the sin irremissible both in this world and in the next? had I not thought that with God there is mercy and plenteous redemption?"

True, we must, in calculating the general result of the severer doctrine, allow for the great access of reckless wickedness on the part of the lapsed whose foolish logic would often be: "In for a penny in for a pound;" who would be slightly or nowise deterred from headlong licentiousness by the doctrine of a graduated hell with many mansions Still, if in such case the bad had been worse, the good had perhaps been better; and since a capitation reckoning of good and bad, irrespective of the kind and degree of goodness or badness, is manifestly a fallacy, it remains conceivable that severity might have been a kinder discipline for us than gentleness

What really revolts us in the harsher view is not only that those now bad would be worse, but that those now good would be bad. The badness of vice, and the badness of the state of sin resulting from a single sinful act, are perfectly distinct and dis-

sociable. A first sin, however grievous, cannot spring from a culpable viciousness induced by a series of sins. On the other hand, in the moment of his first uprising from the mire, the penitent prodigal has all the foul rags of his vicious inclinations still clinging to him. He means not merely to confess and desist from his sinful acts, but to correct his evil inclinations and self-induced vices; he has turned his face homewards as a convert; but he is yet a long way off. The single act that suffices to break or to renew the bond of divine friendship, cannot of itself change the whole character and disposition according to which we reckon a man good or bad. True though it be that good dispositions are valued only for the sake of the actual good conduct which they secure, yet men, since their lives are not concentrated into an instant but spread out over time, are to be classified not by single and often quite exceptional lapses, but by their habitual and average behaviour: "Take a man on his average" is a just and humane maxim, tending to a higher and less cynical view of the race, than is afforded by the principle which says: "Only what is everyway perfect is good; whereas what is anywise imperfect is bad."

Hence, were the first or even the seventh or seventieth sin irremissible, how many of the best and most lovable of mankind who have risen "from stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things," whose very sins were blent into the resulting harmony of their life as a whole, would have been shut out from the kingdom into everlasting

darkness! In like manner, this same turning of every sin to our spiritual gain which characterizes divine forgiveness, if it weakens the stimulus of fear, reinforces the stimulus of love. It is indeed but an extension of the redemption to every detail of man's transgression; since it solves in the same way the problem how God is to "save His word in all things," to vindicate the natural law of the irreparability of sin, of the eternal loss of graces and opportunities neglected; and yet "to make all well that is not well;" namely, by the assumption of the natural into the supernatural in which it is saved and yet transcended,—its substance preserved, its limits abolished. For as part of a greater whole, the very ruggednesses and fractures by which its contour is destroyed are the means by which it is morticed and firmly knit to the rest.

In the death of Christ, God's wisdom devised a plan whereby, natural justice being in all things satisfied, man might be the better and not the worse, for sin; saving His divine word in all things and yet making well what was not well by a mysterious deed whose nature and whose full fruit is yet hid from us.

Doubtless this whole economy gives a handle to presumption, even though it be admitted that to presume on God's generosity is to forfeit it. But against this disadvantage we must set off the salvation of many who would have fallen away through discouragement under the dispensation of fear, and the immeasurably higher kind of love and service elicited by a truer knowledge of the tender

mercies of our God whose forgiveness turns our sins into sacraments and bids us say of each as of all: "*O Felix Culpa quæ talem et tantum meruit habere redemptorem.*"

XL.

THE DIVINE ANGER.

Wilt Thou display Thy power against a leaf that is driven by the wind.—Job xiii. 25. (Vulgate.)

God's anger against sin and the sinner is a solid fundamental truth of all religions; even though the attribution of so human a passion to the divinity be but analogous. The fear of God's anger is the beginning of divine wisdom. We must know His greatness before we can understand His humility; we must realize His wrath before we can be subdued by His gentleness and mercy. In this, religion but gives explicit shape to the shapeless implications of conscience,—to its sanctions of serene peacefulness or of boding fear.

Yet there is a false conception of God's wrath and anger which, in the case of crude religions, mingles with and mars the true. When man trespasses against his fellow-man, and opposes will to will, and desire to desire, not only does he injure his neighbour in his person or in his estate; but he also wounds him in honour; he hurts that natural and laudable pride which a man takes in being regarded and esteemed by others, which makes him desire the praise and shrink from the contempt of even the least of his fellow-men, just because he is a social, unselfish being, destined to live out of himself

and in others, as they in him. And as a rule, it is this wounding of our honour that galls and angers us far more than the outward hurt by which such contempt is implied. I may be impatient aud even angry with a persistent and troublesome fly, but I am not offended with it; nor am I offended by unintentional injuries, however much I may otherwise suffer in consequence of them.

And in the measure that we think the respect and good opinion of another is better worth having, we are more offended and wounded by its denial. Sometimes the littleness of the offender is an irritating circumstance, yet, not because his opinion is valuable,—for his approval would be almost as impertinent as his censure; but because of the just indignation we rightly feel against his unwarranted self-exaltation. What we should laugh at as innocence in a child of five, we should consider impertinence in a boy of ten.

As long as God is imagined man-wise, as, more or less, the first of creatures, it is difficult to the verge of impossibility, to realize what we know so well, namely, that He is not in Himself injured or hurt either in His estate or in His honour by any sin we commit against Him; that all His anger is on our account and not on His own, and is but the obverse of His infinite love for us. He wants our love, our praise, our reverence, because it is for our good, which is identical with His external glory. He hates sin because it will hurt and destroy us, not because it can hurt or destroy Him. Our human way of picturing it saves us from the fatal deistic

error of supposing God to be indifferent to our attitude in His regard one way or the other. His thirst for our love, His wrath against sin, is not only real, but more than real; our image falls short of the truth. But the pure selflessness of this love and wrath is obscured by our figures and analogies, which constrain us to forget the gratuitous lovingness of the act by which God creates, and enters into association with His creatures,—all human associations being founded on mutual indigence. He is angry at our sin and irreverence,—infinitely angry in a sense,—just because it is our mortal self-hurt, and because He loves us infinitely. It is not for His own sake, as though His inner divine life and glory and joy depended upon our service or our good opinion. Yet this is what is implied in all more or less Calvinistic conceptions of God's anger at sin; it is pictured as the anger of a king who has been insulted by the meanest of His slaves; and its heat is measured by the distance between the dignity of the offender and the offended. But God's anger is not that of offended dignity. Besides, with the magnanimous—and we must attribute magnanimity to God—dignity is less, and not more, offended as the distance in rank is greater; and vanishes altogether when the distance is infinite. I am annoyed with the mosquito which stings me; but even were its malace intentional, even were it to think meanly of me, or, through its inability to comprehend me, to deny my very existence while feeding on my life-blood, I should not be offended at the absurdity. And shall God whose serene inward peace is un-

broken and unbreakable and neither heeds the blasphemies of our worst denials, nor feels the stinging of our most venomous malice, shall He be piqued and mortified and infuriated on His own account for aught that little man can ever think or do? Shall He display His omnipotence against a leaf that is shaken with the wind; or trample a withered straw in the fury of His indignation? Here then our "King-and-subject" category mislcads us and entangles us in the unreality of all sorts of abstract and easily misunderstood statements about the infinite malice of sin as measured by the infinite dignity of God,—a malice of which only an infinite being were capable. Objectively, as a disorder in God's world, sin is doubtless an infinite evil; also, as compared with physical evil, with which it has no common measure. But subjectively a finite being is as incapable of infinite badness (in any positive sense of badness) as of infinite goodness. God's anger is more kin to that of the mother who sees her little child playing with fire. He knows that in losing Him our loss is infinite; and therefore His hatred of sin as an infinite evil is measured by His measureless love for us.

XLI.

GOD IN US.

If you keep My commandments you shall abide in My love.—John xv. 10.

That our idea of God to some extent determines our love of Him is but a case of the more general principle that will is dependent upon knowledge—

"*Nihil volitum nisi cognitum.*" Hence to get to know about God is admittedly one of our first and highest duties. On the other hand, it is no less evident and familiar to us that there is no exact equality between the measure of our love, and the measure of our knowledge; between the clearness of our theological conceptions and the purity of our lives. For often the most ignorant and untutored souls, whose ideas about God are almost as grotesque as the idols of primitive savagery, are full of an effectual and tender love of God, in no way justified or explained by their notions of Him; while a refined, spiritual and altogether philosophical conception of the Deity will as often leave the heart dead and cold as a stone.

Indeed Christ seems to imply that, as a rule, the love of God varies inversely with the power of conceiving Him intelligently: "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to babes.' Doubtless, if the wood be dry a little spark will start a great conflagration; whereas green wood may be stubborn to yield to the fiercest flame. The simple unspoilt heart of the child may be quickly and strongly responsive to those feebler rays of divine loveliness which beat idly on the callous surface of a heart hardened by worldliness and sensuality, and by infidelity to past light. Hence the spoken word that falls equally on many ears, is as seed sown over a tract of varying fertility, yielding here nothing, there thirty, sixty, or an hundred-fold.

So far then we may regard the word, the notion,

the mental image of God as a cause of divine love whose efficacy, however, is conditioned by the state of the heart to which the word is spoken. It is not then without reason that, when religious teachers or preachers come to us and tell us that we ought to, and must and shall love God with our whole heart and above all things, we demand: Who is He? Where is He? What is He like, that we should thus love Him on hearsay? And then they begin, each according to his ability, to describe to us in lame words—not God, whom they have never seen, but that notion or image or picture of God which they have laboriously painted in their own minds, that poor, clumsy skeleton-conception which they have strung together piece by piece, and joint by joint, and set up for worship in the shrine of their hearts. And often we could wish that they had either held their peace altogether or had said less. He, who came from the bosom of the Father, could have said much, and yet He said but little; for He knew a more living language than that of the tongue,—one in which He "showed us the Father" by stretching out His all-embracing arms and dying, not only, as man does, for His friends, but, as God does, for His enemies. Hence we are but slowly and slightly stirred by the spoken word, by the notion of God that is transferred, through language, from some other intelligence to our own. What moves us more really in the preacher is, the manner of one who has found some treasure which he himself cannot rightly conceive, still less express to us in words; who has found a well of living

water, a secret fount of happiness which he would willingly share with the thirsty; who therefore excites our curiosity and bids us come and see and taste for ourselves; who knows that his stammering descriptions are almost irreverently unlike what personal experience alone can reveal to his hearers —as unlike as a spoken description of some wonderful symphony, of which all one ought to say is: "Go and hear it."

Therefore a deeper reason why, as a rule, a strong and supreme love of God is quite separable from a clear intellectual conception of His nature, is to be sought in the truth that, in this life God presents Himself to us as an object of the heart and will, rather than as an object of the mind and intelligence; as something to be laid hold of by action rather than by contemplation, as something to be done, rather than as something to be gazed at or argued about. "This is life eternal," says Christ, "that they should *know* Thee;" and certainly hereafter we hope to see God face to face, not as our mind now sees Him in images and symbols and ideas, even as we see our departed friends in their portraits, or in their letters, or in some work they have left behind them. To have the veil torn away which now prevents the light of God's face shining straight into the eyes of our soul, is indeed what we long and labour for. But meantime the veil is there; and it is not by our mind but only by our action that, in this life, we are brought into immediate contact with God. It is right and obligatory that we should, as far as our education and ability

allow, strive to render our ideas about God, those images or pictures of Him which we construct in our mind, *before* which we so often pray (which is no harm) and *to* which we so often pray (which is great harm)—to render those ideas less and less unworthy and superstitious and inadequate. Still we must ever remember that our idea of God is not God; that it is but an internal image and likeness that we have made of Him in our mind; that if in any degree it reveals Him or resembles Him, it also to a far greater extent conceals and dissembles Him that could we come to see Him directly as He really is, the difference between the savage's grotesque conception of God and the philosopher's more spiritual and cultivated conception would seem of little importance in the light of the infinite inadequacy of either; that both alike necessarily conceive God after the likeness of man and in the terms of things bodily and finite; that our boasted superiority in this respect over the savage is that of a child of five over a child of four.

However God may work in the working of our mind, giving it its power and act of vision, giving its objects whatever intelligibility or transparency they possess; yet He Himself is not, in this life, a direct object of our mind; and if here we are to touch Him and be immediately united with Him, it is not in thinking about Him but in acting with Him. For every good action of ours is His also—the offspring of the marriage of our will with His; the seal and pledge of the active union, the union in action, of our soul with Him. From the first suggestion of

good, to the wish, the desire, the will, the accomplishment, He is co-operant with every movement of our faculties.

Who would not envy the lot of Joseph who had Christ for his fellow-labourer in the carpenter's shed at Nazareth; whose knowledge and love of Him was fed by continual partnership in toil, by the sense of co-authorship in the same productions, however lowly and perishable? Yet this is but a faltering symbol of our close intimacy with God in bringing forth in our souls the fruit of a good life—a labour in which His will and action and life is intertwined with ours from beginning to end. We are so used to the influence of His will upon ours that we have lost all sense of it; just as we are so used to the drag exerted upon our bodies by the attraction of the earth that we come to look upon weight as part of our very constitution, and to forget that it is the effect of an action from outside. God is that centre of goodness which draws us ever towards closer union with itself, by a continual magnetic attraction. Whether we climb up-hill or run down-hill we are influenced by the earth's attraction, resisting its force in the one case, using it in the other; and similarly, whether we resist the inclination or use it, in every conscious and free action we are under the influence, however dimly acknowledged, of an attraction towards goodness, of a wish, however feeble and ineffectual, to do the right thing; and if we go with the attraction there is a sense of ease; and if we go against it, a sense of unrest. And this attraction is simply the felt will of

God, whose presence within us is as essentially a condition of our conscious rational life, as air or light is of our bodily life.

And so when we talk of "union with God" let us put aside all childish pictures of the mind which portray that union as a sort of local relation of two things face to face, or fastened or fused together, inactive and unchanging; and let us rather picture it as the meeting or mingling of two streams reinforcing one another, even as when we run down-hill our own action and that of the earth conspire to one and the same end.

So it is not in standing still, but in movement and action that we are united to God and our life mingled with His. And the closer we come to Him the more strongly He draws us; the more frequently, fully, and strenuously we act with God, the more abundantly does He enter into us; so that action is, in a way, the vessel into which God is received. And like every other appetite, the desire for that sense of rest and peace that comes of yielding to God's magnetism, grows keener with every indulgence, till it comes easily to out-sway every counter-attraction, and till nothing irks us more than the unrest of having resisted.

Thus it is that whereas not God, but only some feeble image or symbol of His nature can be touched by our mind, He Himself can be touched by the heart where His will is felt striving with our will, and His spirit with our spirit; and He can be embraced and held fast in the embrace of action whereby His life and ours are spun together and firmly co-twisted

in the union of a single and undivided process. "I am the Way," He says, "and the Truth and the Life"—but principally a Way to be trodden; a Life to be lived. He is also a Truth to be known, an idea to be conceived; yet here, not directly, but through images and shadows—as things distant and absent are known to us.

It is well to know the name, the nature, the effects of some needed medicine if this knowledge will help us to procure and apply it; yet it is not the knowledge that heals us but the medicine; and so a mind-knowledge of God is useful in the present life if it helps us to take Him into our life and action and make Him the medicine of our souls. But it is as the Way and the Life rather than as the Truth that He heals us now; it is not in knowing, but in willing and doing that we realize Him.

Yet if God gives Himself to us in this life to be felt, tasted, and touched rather than seen or pictured to the mind, it must not be forgotten that these forms of direct experience are in their way true knowledge. *Gustate et videte*, says the Psalmist: "Taste, and by tasting see" that God is sweet; as though he would say: It is not the mere idea of God's sweetness that will sweeten life's bitterness, but only the experimental proving of it. Had we no idea of what salt or sugar looked or felt like in their crystallized state, did we but know them in solution, experimentally, as what makes the difference to our palate between brackish water and fresh; or between sweet water and tasteless, yet this would be a most real though partial knowledge; and in like manner

had we no idea or mental picture of God as a distinct Being, unrelated to our practical life, we might yet know Him far more directly, really, and practically as that inward attraction to every kind of goodness which it is sweet to yield to, and bitter to resist; we might know and feel His will experimentally long before we could form any mental idol or picture of His personality. And to say that the extent and clearness of this experimental knowledge depends on the frequency, constancy, and intensity of our experiences, of our active co-operations with God's will, is to utter the veriest truism.

Hence we need trouble ourselves but little about our theoretical notions of God, which are but as pictures of the absent—useful perhaps, as the image of a Saint is useful, to steady our attention, to stimulate memory, and devotion, through memory. "Through memory," for there is no sanctity in the statue, nor anything to appeal directly to our devotion; and similarly there is no divinity in our idea of God, nothing that we can fall down before and worship. We may pray before it, as before a statue, but not to it, for that were idolatry,—not less because our ideas of what God is in Himself are somewhat less grotesque than those to which the savage gives expression in his idols.

Another consequence of this truth is that those who have perhaps never heard God's name—if such there be; who have formed no distinct notion of Him as a separate being; or whose notions of Him are what we should consider utterly false and unworthy; or those again who consider all such notions

equally false and to be repudiated, may yet know God experimentally and love Him with their whole heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; they may put the claims of duty above life itself; they may put truth before father, mother, child, possessions; they may not merely be in sympathy with God's will and way, but in absolute reverential subjection to it; following it not simply because they like it, but because they know it should be followed whether they like it or not. If there are those who "profess that they know God, but who in works deny Him," there are also many who profess not to know Him, but whose deeds contradict their profession.

Often what men deny with their lips they confess with their lives; the sense in which they reject received dogmas is not the true sense, but a travesty thereof—their own or another's; it is not God whom they refuse to worship, but some unworthy idol of the imagination. Of our deepest convictions, our conduct is often the truest utterance; it is just in regard to them that our powers of self-analysis and expression are most apt to fail.

While, then, no man can be saved without faith and knowledge of God, yet there is a truer knowledge than that of ideas and images; a knowledge of direct contact and experiment, a matter of tasting, touching, and feeling. For a musician, a knowledge of Beethoven, means a skill in reproducing his music; not an acquaintance with the details of his biography, though this may be added as a luxury. We know God in the only way essential to our nature and destiny when we know

how to reproduce the music of His life in our own. We need to know the sun as that which gives light and warmth and vigour, but its internal composition concerns us but little.

God is, for many, a necessity of the mind; the bond of unity by which their view of all reality is connected into a whole. Take away the thought of God and their philosophy falls to pieces like a bundle of faggots when the string is cut. Yet it is not so with all. There are imperfect and erroneous philosophies from which He is excluded; which seek the bond of union elsewhere, or seek it in some wholly false conception of God. So feeble and perturbable are our best philosophies that he who holds God only with his mind holds Him most insecurely. Until He has become a necessity of our *whole* life, and not merely of our *mental* life, our faith has no firm root; *Expertus potest credere!* For our life and action has also its principle of unity; some end, some love, some devotion for which we do actually (and not only theoretically and professionally) live. If to part with God or to deny Him would take the meaning and point out of our existence; would extinguish our best enthusiasms; would unidealize our friendships; would cynicize our criticism; would render us hopeless, pessimistic, frivolous, bitter, sensual, then, little as we may be aware of it, He is not only our God but our All. Thus it is that those who are least capable of an intelligent conception of God, do as a rule love Him far more than those whose notions about Him are more philosophical, less obviously superstitious; for

the knowledge which feeds their love is not conceptual or notional, but real and experimental. "I confess to Thee, O Father," says Christ, looking on the world as it always is and shall be, the untaught multitudes on one side, and their teachers on the other, "I confess that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent," from the scientist and metaphysician, from the scribe, the pharisee, and the casuist, "and has revealed them unto babes."

XLII.

GOD'S LIFE IN OURS.

He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is Love. . . . God is love, and he that abideth in love abideth in God and God in him.—1 John iv.

Our Lord tells us that eternal life consists in knowing God; and if at first sight it seems strange that life should consist in what is but a condition and means of life, namely, in knowing, St. John tells us more clearly the kind of knowing that is meant; —a direct experimental knowledge of God's action in us; not an indirect mental representation of God as He seems to Himself. So far as our love of God is excited by consideration and reflection,—by the images and ideas of Him that we form in our mind, —knowledge precedes love. But that knowledge in which eternal life consists follows upon Love. It is a knowledge of God manifested in the fact of our own love of others, of God acting in our action; of God, not as He might seem to other possible creatures, or, apart from all, to the divine self-

consciousness, but as He is in us, mingling His life with ours so inextricably as to defy clear analysis or separation. And he that loveth not his brother knoweth not God, however correctly or sublimely he may conceive Him with his mind; whereas he that loveth, knoweth God, even were his theological notions those of simple savagery or childhood.

Moreover, it is in the inward and outward exercise and operation of love, that we dwell in God and He in us. The dwelling is altogether dynamic and active;—a *process*, as when one sustained musical note makes harmony with another;[1] not a *position*, as of a jewel at rest in its setting.

Not however in any kind of love is the divine life carried on in us and through us; but in that kind only in which all our energies, impulses, and appetites are subordinated to, and pressed into the service of, that sovereign universal Love, which is but the Will of God seeking expression through the instrumentality and co-operation of the rational creature, created for no other end than this. Any other rebel love, breaking from the traces and refusing to serve, brings misty confusion into our life and hides us from ourselves. Only the sovereign love reveals to us what we are in reality,—solidifies the mists of self-illusion into our very truth and substance; wakes us from intangible dreaminess to palpable fact and actuality. St. John speaks of it, not as the

[1] Mark, how one string sweet husband to another,
Strikes each in each by mutual ordering;
Resembling sire and child and happy mother
Who, all in one, one pleasing note do sing.
Shakespeare.

direct love of God, but as the love of our brethren, behind, and through, and in whom God is loved; and more particularly, as the continuance in us and through us of Christ's love for our brethren and for the Father in, and through them.

Love is specified or characterized by its scope and aim, as a seed is by the full-grown tree into which it tends to develop. This love of the brethren, which constitutes our divine life, and in which we recognize the action of God mingling with our own, has no less universal an aim than has the love of Christ, whereof it is but an extension in the same way that the vitality of the branches is but an extension of that of the Vine. Slowly indeed its true character and final expression is developed in human consciousness. Felt at first as a mere push in the dark, we know not whence the blind impulse comes or whither it would drive us; but as with other instincts, we make essays, seeking ease, in this direction and in that, and as one or other satisfies the instinct more, or thwarts it less, we follow on faithfully till some new and fuller indication of its purpose is vouchsafed to us. And thus, in course of time, if we obey, its meaning is gradually expanded before us, and we pass from strength to strength, till we are face to face with God, — with the all-embracing universal Spirit of Love, which strove with our spirit when we knew Him not; — when we yet walked with Him, as with a stranger, by the way, with burning hearts and blinded eyes.

Left to our own gropings we seek the satisfaction

of this divine instinct first in an enlightened egoism —in dying to mere animalism, in living to truth and purity, in giving the supremacy to spiritual over bodily excellence. Breaking from this prison of solitude to that fuller and better self-understanding involved in the instinct of fraternity and justice, we recognize ourselves as members subordinated to the society of our immediate entourage; we seek or sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others. Yet the Divine Will cannot rest there, but ever enlarges the circle of our interest till we come to know ourselves more and more deeply, as members of the human race, and identified with its destiny; then, as part of the entire universe of creatures, animate and inanimate, from which we originate, whose secular labour we gather up into ourselves, to whom we owe, with usury, all that we have received. Still the heart is not at rest; not even in the fondest Utopian dreams of the universal well-being of all creatures is its desire fully interpreted. It is on its way to reality, following the clue, but has not yet arrived. What is still lacking is the keystone of the arch which gives reality and stability to all the substructure. Apart from God, the universal creature is an illusion, an abstraction, an incoherent self-contradicting idea, as is the superficies of the geometer apart from the solid body which it limits. And as the geometrical point or line can have no greater physical reality than the superficies, so I, as a fraction of humanity, or of the universal creature (if these be viewed as suspended *in vacuo* and not as resting on the solid rock of God's reality), am but a

dream within a dream; and the good that I live for, whether my own or that of all my fellow-creatures, is but a less or greater dream, if God's Will be not behind all to give reality to my shadowy aims. Else the chain of purposes, one leading to another, ends nowhere, and hangs on nothing; we can answer the question: "What is this or that for?" but never: "What is everything for?" unless we accept the Will of God as the solution: *Fiat voluntas Tua sicut in cœlo et in terra.* That therefore which I really want, or rather, that which the Divine Will in me wants, is the Divine Good,—created and uncreated. As God is the Author, so is He the end of that Love or Charity which He Himself works in me. The good of all creation could not satisfy that Will except in so far as it is identical with the good of the Creator:

In la Sua volontade è nostra pace.

We want all things to be and move as God wants them to be and move; that is to say, in perfect harmony with His being and movement; so that His being and movement is, when we come to understand ourselves, the first and governing object of our higher will, apart from which, the subordinate object is not coherently thinkable. Picture a man suddenly created in some barren waste who feels for the first time the cravings of physical hunger. We indeed know the meaning, the full physiological interpretation of that craving; we know moreover that if it is a desire for food, it is, by presupposition, a desire or love of self, and of food only in its

relation to self—a desire of self-sustenance, self-preservation; but to him it is a vague mysterious longing till experience shall have taught him—till the presence of its object shall have explained and intensified the appetite. So with this ineradicable appetite of the soul for the food of reality,—at first vague and unintelligible,

> this palpitating heart,
> This blind and unrelated joy,
> That moves me strangely like the Child
> Who in the flushing darkness troubled lies
> Inventing lonely prophecies
> Which even to his Mother mild
> He dares not tell;
> To which himself is infidel;
> His heart, not less, on fire
> With dreams impossible as wildest Arab tale.
> . . . . . .
> In me life's even flood
> What eddies thus?
> What in its ruddy orbit lifts the blood
> Like a perturbed moon of Uranus
> Reaching to some great world in ungauged darkness hid? [1]

As with every other desire, the adequate object towards which the Divine Will within us drives and constrains us, is not something apart from self; but self in some state of betterment, of which the so-called object is but a condition. It is not food that we seek, whether for soul or for body, but self-refreshment, self-development. We desire to grow; that is, to "*be*" more than we are; to have more reality, more life, more love and action than we have.

[1] *Unknown Eros.* By C. Patmore.

Thus from the nature of its object we come to understand the nature of the subject or self to which the will or desire belongs, to whose betterment it tends. If I pass from egoism to a disinterested desire of the well-being of humanity (disinterested relative to the more narrowly and imperfectly conceived self), it is because I am really a member of humanity, and because humanity lives in me, and is the real self which is the subject of the desire, and which seeks its own betterment in and through me, as the whole body seeks its general self-betterment through each several organ and member. But humanity itself is only a part of still greater whole which lives in it, and therefore in me, and whose will and self-seeking also works in mine, though still more deeply and subconsciously. Yet even this will of the universal creature is not coherent or self-explanatory save as a manifestation of the Divine Will whereby *Deus vult suum esse*—God wills to be—wills, principally and fundamentally, the eternal life and action which He ever enjoys; wills, secondarily and dependently, the perfect development and expression of His life and action in the finite order.

This then explains Christ's saying: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to perfect His work." The deepest and most fundamental appetite in the soul is God's love of His own life and action, temporal and eternal. The soul is not God, yet has no reality except in conjunction with the reality of God, who is her foundation and support. Alone, she were unintelligible and

incoherent, as shadow without substance, for she is essentially associated with another (namely, with her God) in the deepest springs of her conscious life. His Will is ever present to her as the will of another, however dimly that "otherness" be apprehended. It is He who, in conjunction with her and with His whole creation—as it were, one Self, one Subject,—desires and seeks the universal good whereby all creatures enter into the eternal joy of their Lord—that joy which He finds in His inner life and action.

That God should be and live, in Himself and in His creatures, is therefore the full object which explains and satisfies the groping of our higher will; and the Self to which this will belongs is a corporate self, double or manifold, the self of a Society — of "God-in-Man" or "God-with-man" in so far as God already lives and dwells in His creatures and desires to dwell in them more fully. God cannot *be* more than He is eternally, but this Society of God and creatures can grow to an ever greater fulness of being, even as body and soul can grow, though in a sense the soul grows not. It is only as conjoined and associated with God that we possess a certain dependent and secondary reality of our own; and that further reality which we seek, is dependent on Him in like manner. Apart from Him or in ignorance of Him, our will can find nothing solid to rest upon or aim at; nothing but what is incoherent, unrelated, or related to the unknown; dreams within dreams; and parts of wholes that are parts of other wholes,

in endless process; lines from all directions ever converging but never meeting.

The question: "Who is this that cometh up from the desert leaning on her Beloved?" conveys a true image of the shadowy and unsubstantial nature of the soul,—as it were the empty skin sloughed by a snake—save so far as God infuses His reality, life and action, into hers. Leaning on Him she is coherent and thinkable; apart from Him she is nothing, and if we would understand her out of reference to Him, we deal with a surd.

Therefore St. Paul says: "If I have not love, I am nothing;" for God is Love, and if that Love should cease to work in me and mingle itself as the fundamental or governing element in all my action, all the reality and coherence of my life and aims were gone. And in so far as I wilfully throw myself out of harmony with this divine bourdon and sing false to it, I am struggling away from God and reality into chaos and nothingness, vainly indeed, as one who should seek to escape the thraldom of the earth's attraction by climbing a steep mountain. In Him even the most reprobate live, and move, and have their being and reality, however much they may hate it and cry for the death that will not come.

XLIII.

CHRIST IN US.

I live, now not I, but Christ in me.—Gal. ii. 20.

The difference between Christian mysticism, and that which can be realized apart from a knowledge of Christ, is that, the divine life which struggles in us for self-expression is now more clearly revealed as to its origin and its aim. As the life of Christ seeking an instrument of further self-manifestation in our being and faculties, its "otherness" in our own life is more clearly defined; it is less of an unattached impersonal tendency towards righteousness; more of a personality, a will, a spirit striving with our spirit, set against our will, marking off our personality. If there may be a partial untruth in this conception of "otherness" between God and the soul, in so far as it seems to number God with His own creatures, to view Him as a great Self among a multitude of subordinate selves, and not as that on which they all depend; yet this error of exaggerated, or rather of an over-materialized, "otherness" is less hurtful, than the almost necessarily alternative error of attributing to our own agency that divine action which, though in us, is not of us, or from us.

Again, Christ as realizing in His own life the divine ideal of perfect humanity, interprets to us the meaning of this blind groping after God which we experience in ourselves; He sets the end to which we are being moved before our eyes; He

shows us the complete development of the divine seed that is sown in us by nature and fostered by grace.

Not only does Christ's humanity, by thus explaining us to ourselves, add new definiteness to the mystical life; it is also instrumental, through the as yet hidden, but dimly felt, organic oneness of all human souls, in the reinvigoration and extension of that life. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," says St. Paul, ascribing the divine action in the Christian soul to the Incarnate God, who is the Head and Form of that living body, whereof all are members, and which acts as a whole in the action of each,—a truth which finds expression in the Sacramental system.

Hence in the Christlike action of each several member Christ does literally extend and continue that life which He began while here on earth; not merely *exemplariter* as the schoolmen would say, not merely by way of replica and reflection, but *causaliter*, since a holy life or action resembles His, precisely because it *is* His. What frightens many away from mysticism, and makes them cling to the easily-pictured, though crude conceptions of their childhood—(those, namely, with which the religious art of the middle ages furnishes us), is a vague apprehension of pantheism or else of illuminism; —of confusing the clear, hard lines by which a materialistic theism divides God from the soul, and souls from one another, without any sort of even local compenetration.

The true nature of the distinction being un-

imaginable, if we take away that which is imaginable we seem to have nothing left to save us from the fallacy of confusion. Yet the counter-fallacy which numbers God and His creatures in the same category—one here, one there, is not less irreverent, and is at the root of much unreality in religion.

Every comparison necessarily misrepresents a relationship which is altogether unique; but a multitude of such comparisons may hedge in and narrow the area in which the inaccessible truth lies buried. If in some sense God is the soul of our soul, it does not mean that, with it He constitutes one substance. It does mean that the soul depends on Him for its existence and action far more immediately and closely than the body does upon the soul, though in a different and inexplicable way. It means that the soul is by nature an organ of divine self-expression, as the body is the organ by which the soul utters itself—yet again, in a different and inexplicable way. It means that as the body and soul are distinct, without being two things of the same class or kind; so God and the soul are distinct yet not "connumerable,"—though again in a spiritual and inexplicable way. It does not mean that absolutely and in Himself, God would not be intelligible without reference to the soul, as the soul would be unintelligible without reference to the body; but it does mean that as the body is altogether for the soul and is inconceivable and impossible apart from it, so the soul is inconceivable save in reference to God, who is the key that alone unlocks the treasury of her highest capacities; it

means that He shapes her to His own purpose and end even as she gathers to herself the dust of earth and weaves it in to that bodily garment that half hides and half reveals her mysterious nature; that when His free action in our mind and heart is impeded, the corruption and disintegration of our whole moral and mental life is the result. Yet God is not a part or constituent of our personality, although His presence, His life, His action are thus mingled with ours; and although a shadow does not relate to and depend on a substance more closely than our soul on God. The earth on which we tread, the air we breathe, the light we behold, the food on which we live, are no part of our being. Yet our muscles and limbs, our organs, our senses are unintelligible without them and idle apart from them. So too God is the ground on which our soul rests and walks; the light it sees by, the food it feeds on, the heat that warms it, the air that invigorates it; we are in Him as He in us: "In Him we live and move and are" no less than He lives and moves and is in us.

But even when the fear of pantheism is removed, the notion of mystical religion is often associated with the claim to a false illuminism, to an ecstatic vision of the deity, a special intuition of divine mysteries which is usually taught to be the prerogative only of the blessed in Paradise. Flying from such an illusion, we may and mostly do fall into another, far more deadening to spiritual reality; that, namely, which denies any other generally accessible knowledge of God than that indirect,

inferential knowledge of Him as He is imaged in the constructions of theological reasoning or in the materialized pictures of the imagination. These mental ideas and pictures are not revealed to us or created in our mind by God; they are our own patchwork, put together laboriously from indirect evidence. If I see a man face to face his image is impressed on my senses without any building up on my part. If I only hear him spoken of, the visual image I form of him is of my own making. So the images and mental ideas in which we know God are not derived from facial vision of His being, but are built up in accordance with our inferences as to His nature, drawn from the character of His work in us and outside us; and being confessedly fashioned more or less human-wise, are infinitely inadequate and unworthy.

So far then as mysticism is thought to aim at a direct ecstatic vision of God, and to derive its ideas and images of Him from such vision, and not by the ordinary way of inference, it is justly feared as fostering dangerous illusions. But true mysticism has no such aim. It simply emphasizes and gives the first importance to that direct and experimental knowledge of God which is possessed by all, though little heeded. So far as it represents God in mental ideas and images, constructed in accordance with what from His workings we infer He ought to be like, seen face to face, its likenesses of Him are no better, no less childish, than those of other men. Perhaps the mystic is more explicitly conscious than they, of the essential and necessary untruthfulness

involved in the very notion of a likeness of God. Every "likeness," as such, affirms that the original *is* thus or thus. This affirmation may be true when creatures are represented; but must be false when God is represented, and it is only by recognizing its falsehood that we can get some truth out of it—the truth of an analogy.

But if instead of trying to build up pictures and theories of what God is in Himself—or rather, to Himself—I content myself with observing what He is to me, what He is to His creatures; this knowledge of His workings in me and outside me is direct, experimental, and accessible to all. It is one thing to know God *in* His workings; another to know Him *from* His workings.

If in the dark I feel myself violently pushed or drawn in one direction, I know there is some cause at work of which I can form no certain visual picture, and yet of which I have a very real and direct knowledge in its immediate effects. So too we all have direct experience of a kind of force that draws or impels our will towards what is right; and if we yield ourselves to this force and do not resist it, we discern more clearly the design by which it is governed, the ultimate purpose towards which it is developing slowly. This knowledge of God's working and action in regard to us is direct, and not inferential; though it supplies the ground of an inference by which we pass from the known to the unknown—from the nature of God's manifest workings to the nature of His hidden being. The mystic views the former practical concrete knowledge as all-important,

and the latter, which is theoretical and abstract, as less important. For us who walk in the light of faith it is more needful to grip hold of God's hand, than to dream what His face is like, still more as the dreaming often enfeebles our grasp.

The somewhat intellectual "meditations which play so large a part in the spiritual exercises of modern piety are liable to be vitiated by an excessive straining after ideas and images of what God is to Himself; as though He were to be known only through the representations of our mind; and not chiefly in His direct workings upon the heart. In short, what is secondary and subordinate is made primary and everything; for the whole value of our religious theory and symbolism is to give some lame sort of mental expression and interpretation to those facts of internal experience which are the substance and root of all religion—facts which can no more be exhausted by theories, than a flower by a botanical formula.

Even Christ is sought rather in the life that He once led outside us, than in that which He is continually living within us, and in which every event of the other has its mystical counterpart.

Unheeded, the unknown God cries out in the heart of man by the voice of conscience: "Why persecutest thou Me?' He cries out to us as one most intimate with us from our childhood, calling us, as would a parent or a brother, by our own name. He calls out in His pain and anguish, His hunger and thirst from that spiritual Calvary in our soul, where we crucify Him daily and put Him to

an open shame, resisting, tormenting, persecuting Him. And yet, in some sense, unwittingly; for so close is He to us that in thought we do not divide Him from ourselves, but confound that Holy Will that strives and works in us, with our own. For "closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet." "Who art Thou?" we answer to His cry of sharp pain when, through His grace, this sense of "otherness" is brought home to us for the first time, and we find that in betraying, despising, and resisting our conscience we have all along been betraying, despising, and resisting our God, as real actors in that supreme tragedy which the historical Passion of Christ but symbolizes and makes visible to our imagination. Even when we are not crucifying Him afresh by flagrant sin, we are ever tormenting and persecuting Him by negligence, by recklessness, by skirting the edge of sin's precipice, so that He is never at rest or free from anxiety.

XLIV.

GOD'S JEALOUSY.

I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God.—Exodus xx. 5.

There is certainly a sense in which God must be loved alone; in which we are to have no other god but Him. Some, following in the wake of certain mystics, have taught that in its highest perfection the soul's love for God is so like that of spouse for spouse as to put on the same character of exclusive and lawful jealousy. "My beloved for me," they quote, "and I for Him;" and in this they place

the rationale of the need of celibacy or virginity for those who aspire to perfect love—denying, not perhaps the absolute, but certainly the practical, possibility of such love of God in the case of those who owe so similar a love to wife or husband: God, in fact, might have reason to be jealous. Even those who regard the two loves as moving in different planes, and therefore not capable of direct collision, consider that the sum of human energy and attention being limited, the same part of it which is given to the one kind of love must be taken from the other; so that God may be jealous not of the love, but of the attention and energy it absorbs—as a lover might be jealous of his mistress' spaniel. In this sense also God might conceivably be jealous of any absorbing love whether of parent or child or brother or friend; and more especially of conjugal love, simply as more absorbing. These, more aptly than the others, appeal to St. Paul's words when he says that the married care for their partners, whereas the unmarried care for the Lord.

By way of objection to the first view, it is clear that the "sponsal" analogy or metaphor, while in no sense ever equalling the mysterious union of love and operation between God and the soul, must not be pressed in all points. "Each for the other only" is distinctive of the earthly relationship; but can it be said in any very evident sense that God is for the soul only? That He loves each separate soul with an *exclusive* love is, on the surface at all events, a contradiction in terms. That He loves each *as though* He loved no other, means merely that

His love is not, like ours, thinned by diffusion, that it is as particular as it is universal and all-embracing. If we would love another with anything like the same particularity, it must be by withdrawing our care and attention from millions of others equally or more loveable. This narrowing of the vision and the affections is produced spontaneously by the passion of love; and also by a free act of the will when we *give* our affection to another in some exclusive way, as happens in marriage, where each virtually promises not to look abroad but to concentrate and focus the mind upon the other, thus seconding the natural blinding tendency of the conjugal affection. It is an instinctive recognition of the limited quantity of human attention, affection, and energy, that lies at the root of the feeling of jealousy. "The more for you," it seems to say, "the less for me; and I will have all or none."

God therefore loves each with a particularity that *in us* would often involve loving no other, but in Him consists with loving every other as particularly. Hence His love for my soul is not exclusive, and if He wants me on my part to love Him exclusively, with a quasi-conjugal love, He does not pretend to reciprocate this exclusiveness, or to pay me that compliment after which jealousy might hanker, of being all and only for me. To sacrifice reverence to clearness—it is as in the polygamous family where each wife must have only one husband, but that husband may have many other wives. Indeed it is the Church, the Human Soul taken collectively, in its million-membered organic unity, that is the

Spouse of God and the archètype of Christian monogamy. It is through all, that He is wedded to each.

Even then if God wants a quasi-conjugal love from the soul, incompatible with the bestowal of the full measure of such love on any creature, the non-exclusive nature of the love, which He gives in return, points to one serious limitation of the whole metaphor.

In all this matter there are two distinct conceptions struggling for birth, often in one and the same mind, and whose relations of compatibility or repugnance will be best determined by endeavouring to give them clear enunciation.

First, there is that implied in the common language of all, save a very few, of the principal ascetics and saints—language perhaps consciously symbolic and defective in its first usage, but which has been inevitably literalized and hardened when taken upon the lips of the multitude. The God of popular asceticism is almost necessarily viewed as a "Giant Self amid a multitude of lesser selves," as the First of creatures competing with the rest for the love of man's heart. Whatever love they win from us in their own right, is taken from Him. Even though He be loved better than all of them put together and thrown into the opposite scale of our estimation,—even though He be loved supremely, yet He is not loved perfectly till He be loved alone. Those who would be perfect must mortify every natural affection for father, mother, brethren, and friends; above all they must exclude the absorbing

affection of spouse for spouse if they would be His only, all for Him. If the unsocial issues of this transfer of all natural affection from the creature to the Creator be objected, it is explained that the regard or service paid to them purely for God's sake, and irrespective of their own inherent qualities, is something far higher, more universal and impartial than that which such inherent qualities would naturally and directly elicit without any reference to God. In no other way is it allowed that we can love creatures without taking away from the love of God. Else we love them instead of God; or more than God; or in addition to God; and therefore more or less idolatrously.

If all our truths are in some way alloyed with falsehood, spiritual truths, which are confessedly veiled in symbols and metaphors, are more essentially subject to such limitation; nor is it ever a choice between a wholly true or a wholly false proposition, but at best between a less or more true; a more or less false. Further, what is in itself, or with reference to a better instructed mind, a truer expression may, to a ruder mind be less true, and more practically misleading. And so this imperfect popular essay at an arrangement of facts such as to justify the precept of the sovereign and exclusive love of God is, for all its limitations, the most generally serviceable. Treated as unalloyed truth, and pressed accordingly to its utmost logical consequences, it becomes a source of danger; but as a fact it is not and will not be so treated by the majority of those who serve God faithfully but

without enthusiasm. With these the love of God is mainly rational and but slightly emotional. They are habitually resolved to give Him His due, and not to offend Him; but as they do not conceive themselves called to offer Him an all-absorbing affection, or to love Him exclusively as well as supremely—this being, according to the view in question, a special and exceptional vocation—their natural affections are not weakened, but at most curbed of any sinful extravagance. It is only when they conceive themselves called to perfect love, that the element of falsehood with which their view of the matter is alloyed, begins to work mischief.

First of all there is the initial assumption that the precept of loving God alone and exclusively binds some but not all; that it interferes with certain natural relationships, social and domestic; that to embrace the married state is to resign higher degrees of friendship with God. Hence a violent effort to limit and weaken every kind of natural affection in order to transfer the energy thus economized to God, viewed, so to say, as the First and Greatest of creatures, and apprehended, not directly, but only through the uncertain ideas which the mind has clumsily built up to represent Him, or still more commonly, through the merely symbolic pictures of the imagination. It is in some sort like an effort to take no pleasure in the simple melody we are listening to, but to stop our ears to its distracting loveliness, in order to be ravished by the newspaper report of an oratorio. Here and there a vivid

imagination and an unwontedly concentrated effort of will may partially accomplish the feat; but in most cases we miss both the melody and the oratorio; that is to say, we detach our affections from creatures and fail to attach them to the dull image we have formed of the Creator. This is the root-reason of so much of that dryness and desolation, that sense of stifled powers and starved capacities of love, of which so many religious and devout people complain who have left all in order to love God better and seem to have done so in vain. Well for them if a heart, vacant and "to let," do not fall into the disrepair and ruin of selfishness. The exceptional cases in which the heart seems to find a full expansion of its affections in an exclusive devotion to God leave it still doubtful whether that devotion is really stronger *because* other devotions are weakened or cut off; the more so as we notice that a St. Teresa or a St. Francis of Assisi overflows with a love for those around, which it is hard to explain as purely extrinsic and indirect, or as in no way elicited naturally by the inherent loveableness of the creature. Indeed, souls of that type seem to be, at least unconsciously, dominated by a wholly different conception of the matter, even when they adopt the language of popular asceticism, or break but rarely from its customary and consecrated forms of expression.

In some sense or other it is plainly as *natural* for man to love God and to realize his final happiness in that love, as it is for him to love his parents or children or spouse. But whereas there is a

faculty of easy apprehension and knowledge, to feed the flame of filial or parental or neighbourly affection, we have no such God-apprehending faculty whereby divine love can find a stimulus at all comparable. God, as a separate personality, apart and in Himself, is known by inference from His works or by faith in His revelation. A human personality so known, however loveable in itself, or beneficent in regard to us, could hardly hope to compete very successfully for the affection we give to those who are ever present to our senses and who necessarily occupy our continual attention. It might possess the homage of our reason and the loyalty of our reverence and service above all others, but the endeavour to wrest our emotional affection from those present, to bestow it on one absent would be doomed to failure because it would be violent and non-natural. But whereas we can build up some tolerable image of a man whom we know only from his works and by hearsay; of God as He is in Himself, and as a separate object of possible affection, we can have no image that is not entirely symbolical and unlike the reality. Hence the doctrine of an Incarnation meets a definite want which makes itself felt in the religious intelligence as soon as anthropomorphic conceptions have been outgrown. Yet the noblest human attributes of even a Christ are not divine; nor is the love they elicit divine love, although it be the love of that Man who is also God. In fine, the effort to transfer to God, as known through or in the self-constructed representations of the mind, that affection which is

called forth naturally by those around us, is unreal, and nearly as impossible as the effort to fly without wings, or to perform any other feat beyond our natural faculties. We can and must yield Him the supreme place in our rational estimation or practical recognition; but this purely spiritual worship, being in a different plane, cannot interfere with the fullest development of any well-ordered natural affection however intense or absorbing; or justify the suspicion of any jealousy in God.

Our escape from the maze is effected by recognizing that these same natural affections, when pure and well-ordered, far from robbing God of so much affection, are part and parcel of the love that we owe to Him; that so far as the love of God is affectionate and emotional, as well as spiritual and rational, that affection is elicited by the loveable qualities of His creatures; that it passes to Him through them. Not as though we were to argue: "If the creature is thus fair, how much fairer the Creator: hence let me take my heart from the creature and give it to the Creator," for this were to put God beside His creature, and not—as the light that shines through it—behind it. If we remember that God cares more to be known as in us, than as apart from us,—in solution, so to say, than in separation—as a will, a power, an action, a life mingling with and essentially conditioning our own will power, action, and life, than as He is to Himself, or as He is in relation to other things outside us; that He cares more that we should grip His hand in the dark than dream about His face,

we shall understand that for us to love God supremely and alone, means to care for nothing but that in all our life and action the divine life and action shall find the fullest possible expression; that as we are actively at one with the stream when we swim with the current and not against it, so we shall be actively at one with God in yielding ourselves to His impulses and attractions; that in all our natural affections we love God, if we love what He would have us love, and in the divinest way possible—as Christ in similar conditions would have loved, whether as father, son, brother, or husband, nay, more, whether as mother, daughter, sister, or wife.

To illustrate by what is really an imperfect aspect of the same truth, when we say that a man's first care should be to love reasonably and in no way unreasonably, we imply that he should love Reason above all things. Now though in the last resort Reason is not an abstraction, but God the personal source of all reasonableness, yet the Reason on whose claims to preference we insist is not consciously conceived as a separate person competing for the affection of those whom we love, but as an infused element and formal principle by which that affection is elevated, strengthened, and purified, which interferes with nothing but its possible extravagances and corruptions. Reason, however, is but a thinner and poorer conception of the Divine, the Christlike, the will of God; and so when we speak of giving God the first place in our affections we mean chiefly and only caring that every affection

be as Godlike and God-pleasing as possible; we do not mean, crowding them all into a corner to make room for God in our hearts; we mean that the Divine Love, which is the sovereign reasonableness, should mingle with, control, and perfect every other love. It is the "form," the principle of order and harmony our natural affections are the "matter" harmonized and set in order; it is the soul, they are the body of that divine love whose adequate object is, God in His creatures; which loves all in Him, and Him in all not falsely sundering what He has joined together; not making two loves out of the imperfect co-principles of one perfect love.

Union with God is oftenest conceived statically, as it were a permanent embrace of the soul clinging to her Maker, as the ivy to the oak; or as her fixed and motionless contemplation of that picture of Him which she has fashioned for herself; or, if at all dynamically, it is as the union of two men working in the field, or of two women grinding at the same mill. But more truly, it is a union of the soul with herself, to which we might not inaptly twist the words: "Jerusalem is built as a city which is at unity with itself." For in yielding, instead of opposing, all her energies and affections to that Will of whose continuous stress she is as conscious as of the earth beneath her feet, she alone realizes her true self, her true life,—God's action and love becoming the "form" of her action and love.

And as he is the principal Agent in her every right action, the principal Lover in her every well-ordered love, and she but the instrument; so, in

whatever or whomsoever she loves rightly and divinely, for its true goodness and divinity, it is He who is ultimately loved—He, who shines through it. Hence in all pure affection it is ultimately God who loves, and God who is loved; it is God returning to Himself, the One to the One.

To imagine then that we can love God more, by loving creatures less, is an error akin to that which supposes that we can know Him better the less we know of those creatures which reveal Him; and that He is to be found by shutting our eyes and not by opening them. If Christianity taught that the perfect love of God required us, in any literal sense, to hate father or mother or to love them less we might well cry: "This is a hard saying: who can bear it?" He who wept over the grave of His friend will not be jealous because His friend weeps over the grave of a mother or a child. Indeed all the saints and practical proficients in the science of divine love felt this truth, and have striven in various degrees to give it clear expression, though not always consistently freeing themselves from the entanglements of the popular conception. If St. Paul commends celibacy it is, obviously, because of the practical incompatibility of the active service of God and the service of a family: because of the consequent freedom to live or die for the cause of the Gospel; and not because Christianized married love is something apart from the love of God or incompatible with its highest perfection, or otherwise than one of the most fruitful occasions of the exercise of that love.

Though well-ordered natural affections can no more interfere with the love of God than a straight line can interfere with straightness, or a sweet savour with sweetness, yet they can interfere with one another, being in the same plane. We cannot each love God in all these modes simultaneously, but must make choice according to our circumstances. Those who seek Him in the love of the family, cannot well seek Him in a direct and exclusive devotion to the Church or the Community; but both alike find Him in a full, though different, expansion of their natural affections.

It is perhaps a common misunderstanding of that Catholic tradition which exalts voluntary virginity above the conjugal state, that favours the notion of God's being jealous of the more absorbing forms of human affection, and requiring an impossible transfer thereof to Himself. In her conception of the relationship subsisting between the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, the Church teaches implicitly that absolute virgin chastity not only consists with but characterizes the highest ideal of conjugal love; that human love is divine in the measure that it is elevated, strengthened and purified by self-denial; that it is woven of impulse and restraint, and that all its degradation is due not to the absolute excess of the former,—there is no such thing — but to the relative defect of the latter, since the stronger horse needs the tighter rein. Neither in the Church's preference of virginity, nor in her commendation of celibacy as practically expedient for her clergy; nor in the

words of Christ Himself; nor in the clear teaching of the great masters of Christian mysticism, is there aught to countenance that explanation of the divine jealousy which regards God practically as the First of creatures competing with the rest for the limited kingdom of the human heart—an explanation which in some respects seems part of the miserable legacy bequeathed to the Church by Neo-platonism, and which tends to represent religion as hostile to the natural life of man's intelligence and affections, and not as the formal principle and inherent perfection, whereby that life is eternalized and deified.

XLV.

THE PATH OF COUNSEL.

If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments; if thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast . . . and follow Me. —Matt. xix. 17.

Although the more essential and obligatory way of knowing and loving God is to know Him experimentally, as we know that act by which our own will co-operates with His internal impulse, and to love Him, not alongside of, but through, in, and with the creatures which He inclines us to love,—which He loves by means of our love; yet He should also be the study of our mind, according to the measure of our intelligence and education. We are bound to try to form, not an adequate, but a symbolically truthful image and likeness of God; to express Him to ourselves as worthily as He can be expressed in the terms of things finite, in ideas borrowed by abstraction from the objects that fall under our

senses. When we have laboriously built up our noblest image of Him it differs but in degree of unworthiness from the crudest idol of the savage mind, unless we consciously regard it as merely a symbol of what is ineffable and inexpressible. In the act of divine love we make ourselves like to God; but in the contemplative effort we try to make God like to us; the will becomes like its object—we are what we love; but the mind receives the object into its own mould, and gives it its own shape.

This mind-knowledge of God, as of a distant Being apart from creatures, really figures Him as the Head and First of creatures; for we can figure no other kind of being or unity or distinction. Yet we need the incidental error of this mode of viewing Him, to correct the contrary error incidental to the experimental method of knowing Him, namely, the error of confusion—of failing to mark the "otherness," the personal distinctness, of the Will within our will. On one side we lean towards deism, on the other towards pantheism; truth lies midway, and evades any exact similitude. The relation of God to His creature is unique and incomparable.

For this mind-knowledge, in any high degree, special aptitudes are needed—not merely intellectual but imaginative, ethical, emotional. If the study of mere theology needs certain mental sacrifices and withdrawals—a certain narrowing of other interests, and an absorption of time and attention; plainly the endeavour to lead a life of intellectual contemplation—of more or less conscious and reflex attention to the presence of God, distinguished in and from

creatures; to cultivate conceptions of the divine personality and character calculated to elicit a love of the unseen Goodness from which all seen goodness is derived—plainly such an endeavour demands that withdrawal from the ordinary conditions of life which is the *raison d'être* of contemplative monasticism. *Vacate et videte*—Leisure is the condition of this sort of vision. Like the call to continence or to the apostolate, it is exceptional—for the few, not for the many; it is more or less a super-human vocation to the state of angels rather than of men,—an attempt to anticipate the life of vision, and to see God as the blessed see Him face to face.

No such vocation can be fulfilled but by a sacrifice of functions proper and helpful to a lower grade of life. The notion of a full development of *all* our capacities is self-contradictory, since of the innumerable shapes into which we might successfully mould ourselves, we are forced to choose one and forsake all the rest. To say that the religious vocation stunts and absorbs the family affections, is as true as to say that domestic life stunts and absorbs the contemplative faculty—just as all the time and attention a man bestows on literature interferes with the development of his scientific faculty; and *vice versâ*. An equal, all-round development even of simultaneously compatible perfections would ensure a sort of regular-featured mediocrity; but would exclude any kind of eminence which, as a fact, is always purchased at the cost of some little deformity and narrowness.

And for this reason, men are associated together

—their inequalities and jagged edges being the very principle of their cohesion—so that where one is weak, another may be strong; where one is narrow, another may be broad. Were we isolated, independent units we could not afford to specialize, interiorly or exteriorly, but should have to make everything for ourselves, and to limit our wants to the barest beginnings of life, spiritual or temporal.

XLVI.

LEAVING ALL.

And Jesus looking upon him loved him.—Mark x. 21.

Loved him for what he already was and had been; and for what he might yet, but would never be. Unlike the apathetic and carnal-minded multitudes this man was eager, not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat which endureth to life everlasting. "What shall I do to possess eternal life?"—this had been the governing anxiety of his soul from his youth upwards; nor, had there been self-complacency and pretence behind his claim to unbroken fidelity to the commandments, would Christ, the reader of hearts, and lover of truth, have looked into him and loved him. And yet he was rich and young and in high position—three conditions usually deemed unfavourable to religious enthusiasm. But he comes running eagerly and openly before the eyes of all, and bends the knee to one so compromised, so dangerous to acknowledge openly; he calls Him "Good Master" in some pre-eminent and divine sense; he lays bare his anxiety

with ardent abruptness and impetuosity. And he is no dreamy contemplative, no doctrinal dilettante: "What shall I *do?*" he asks—he, who had already done so much, keeping the commandments from his youth upwards. For he knows that the eternal and highest life of man consists in action, in energy, in sacrifice of what a man has, still more of what he is; for he that would save his life must lose it, he that would live must die. And yet he is not at peace; he is haunted by the importunity of Divine grace with its ceaseless: "Friend, come up higher." Nor can he discern what it is that he lacks; and so he hastens to the all-discerning Physician of souls and demands: "What more is lacking to me?" It is one thing *to enter* into the state of eternal life, wherein God is overwhelmingly the substance and principal condition of our happiness, for whom we would forsake all; and another thing *to be perfect* in that state; to need no other supplementary condition to complete our happiness, and to bring every other affection into perfect harmony with the great central governing Love of our life; to love God not merely supremely, but alone. In this pure and generous soul it would seem that wealth was loved, not in opposition to God, but apart from God as something supplementary; that there was a sort of qualified will to do everything to get nearer to God—everything compatible with retaining his possessions. He would have sacrificed them in order to enter into life and save his soul; but not in order to be perfect, and to walk still more closely with God. Subconsciously he hopes our Saviour

will ease his unrest by suggesting some compromise. But Christ reads him through and through, and looking into him loves him for what he is, and for what he might be, but never will be—as a sculptor might look at some fair block of marble and think of all he could make out of it were it not for just one little flaw. With firm kindness He lays His skilled finger on the shrinking sore, and mercifully unmerciful gives the dreaded and unwelcome verdict: "Go; sell all and give to the poor." "He went away sad," as many another soul turns its back, not upon salvation, but on the fuller and nobler salvation, content to bear thirty instead of sixty or an hundred-fold. And Christ too went away sad.

XLVII.

PRAYER OF PETITION.

Ask and it shall be given to you.—Luke xi. 9.

Prayer in the stricter sense of asking for things which we cannot otherwise get, offers no difficulties where more or less anthropomorphic notions of God prevail; but these begin to be felt as a more scientific theology developes, and as the reign of law is seen to be more universal. Hence we cannot argue for such prayer as we do for religion, *sc.*, that it is postulated more strongly as man grows upward to intellectual and ethical maturity. But, as in other points, the simpler view may be nearer the truth than the more abstract and reflex; and if philosophy in its present stage weakens the basis of such prayer, revealed religion calls us back to

the more human conception of the All-Father, purified of its primitive rudeness and unworthiness, and anticipates herein the deeper philosophic reflection of times to come. "Ask and ye shall have; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you" is the word of One who realized that "your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things;" who was alive (as even the old prophets were alive) to the dangers of anthropomorphism, to the need of a spiritual conception of God, and yet saw beyond to that point where ends and beginnings so often meet, and where we discover that we left our first thought only to find it again in a purified form as the result of many wanderings and seekings.

The motive of all prayer must be the Divine Will so far as that will is (in accordance with the established order) determinable by prayer. Prayer and persuasion between man and man is a real determining factor in human life, modifying but not interfering miraculously with the course of nature; and granting a quasi-paternal relation between God and man, Divine prayer-answering is as little an interference with the order of the world. An increased knowledge of physical laws shows us that many things we might otherwise have asked for as dependent solely on prayer, would involve an interference with the regular course of nature which would be miraculous; *i.e.*, would call not merely for an application of God's perfect knowledge and power in the use of nature's mechanism, but for an alteration in the structure itself. Conceivably such

a miraculous interference might be "good;" and under that condition it might be prayed for: but *per se* it is not good; and to ask for it would be an exhibition of wilfulness.

We need not doubt that prayers and petitions addressed to false gods are really heard and answered; or that various illicit or ignorant kinds of recourse to other-world aid are really effectual. For God respects the faith-element in all such appeals, and ignores and pardons the blamelessly unworthy form in which such prayer is couched. Are not our own best and most philosophical conceptions of God crude and childish, and our most cultivated prayers correspondingly mingled with false suppositions of all kinds? Were God to be deaf to ignorant prayer lest He should seem to condone and sanction error, who could be saved? To believe that this sensible world is not all; to acknowledge an other-world Wisdom, Power, and Providence greater than our own; to regard ourselves as naturally and essentially dependent on that higher world—this is that elemental faith that lies at the bottom of all religions, even of the most barbarous, and which makes prayer as natural to man as speech is: *i.e.*, the prayer of petition and impetration as distinct from the prayer of mystic contemplation; the prayer addressed to the Power and Providence which rules this world. God, "who feedeth the young ravens that call upon Him," will not quench the smoking flax, but respects the faith of the lowliest cry for help, however harsh and discordant. To say that because prayer addressed

to a false god is answered; or that because a certain superstitious method of appeal proves efficacious, therefore the falsehood and the superstition is tolerable or non-existent is plainly a fallacy.

XLVIII.

THE PRAYER OF CONFORMITY.

O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt.—Matt. xxvi. 39.

It is only so far as God condescends to bear Himself humanwise in our regard,—to "become man and dwell among us"—that we can enter into those practical relations with Him in which religion consists. Were His thoughts in no wise as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways, we could as soon hold intercourse with the sun or the moon to whose influence we are subject, but to which we make no appeal, and look for no sympathy.

Unless the Infinite can equivalently limit Himself to something like our smallness; unless the All-Knowing can become ignorant, and the unchanging changeable, religion is impossible, and a dreary deistic philosophy takes the place of faith in a God who is not only the "First Cause" but also "Our Father." This is the faith and hope which underlies the lowliest beginnings of religion, and for which bare reason apart from our deeper spiritual instincts offers so trembling a basis. To purify our conception of God from every semblance of humanity would be to destroy any possibility of its appeal to our imagination and emotion, without which it would be practically ineffectual in our

lives. And thus there is a graduated continuity between our lowest and our highest representations of the Heavenly Father; though it cannot be said that the more intellectual notion is always the more forcible and effectual: for which reason it would almost seem that as soon as men rose to a more spiritualized idea of God, the Incarnation, which gave them a God-man—was a practical necessity for the survival of religion. The God of Neo-platonism could have done little for humanity.

The practice of making our petitions known to God by prayer or supplication, supposes that He makes Himself known to us as being equivalently a human father or ruler who, in the main, governs us by fixed and practically irrevocable laws, but leaves many details to be determined, each individually, in response to petition and merit, by which favours the general law suffers no exception or derogation. In ordinary prayer of petition we do not mean to ask for a miracle—for any exception to general laws—but in our ignorance of the limits of the reign of law many of our requests are for what would be a miracle, or at least a derangement of some wide-reaching eternal plan affecting interests infinitely more important than our own.

Thus our particular requests, if reasonable, must always be conditional: "*If it be possible*, let this cup pass from Me"—if it be among those things left open to prayer and not already determined irrevocably by universal laws. Our steadily increasing discovery of law in regions where formerly its presence was undreamt-of, has given birth to an

inductive belief in its absolutely universal prevalence (at least in the physical order—for, recent reflection tends to exclude the very possibility of uniformity from the world of freedom, personality, and spiritual action).

Hence we are better prepared to find that petitions demanding a miraculous interference with the determinism of Nature are seldom answered according to the letter, and we are more apt to attribute seeming answers to coincidence or illusion in many cases.

But we cannot admit that such requests, made in good faith, and conditionally, are fruitless, or should in any wise be discouraged. Those, of course, whose minds are obsessed with the sense of all-pervading law cannot, and ought not ordinarily, to pray for what they would regard as miracles, and what simpler souls can ask for heartily and naturally. The faithful prayer of these latter does not return empty into their bosom, though its object is impossible, but wins for them an equivalent blessing. As for the former, they have still endless scope for the exercise of prayer. First, because outside the world of material determinism there is the world of spirit and liberty to which the direct dealings between God and the soul belong. In the movements of our inmost life where every act, taken adequately, is unique, and unlike any other in all human experience, there is no room for repetition, uniformity, and law, no certain prediction of consequent from antecedent. The mechanism of our brain may be as rigid as that of our body, but

in the use and application of that mechanism we are free. We do not ask intentionally of our neighbour a service which is beyond the fixed limits by which his capacity is circumscribed—morally or physically. But we can ask conditionally for what we presume to be consistent with those limits; and we can ask unconditionally for the free and untrammelled service of his good-will—the greatest service man can render to man, and that which constitutes the social bond and makes one body out of many members. And since we must take God as He has given Himself to us, humanwise or nowise, we can always ask conditionally for what may be within the limits of His immutable designs; and absolutely, for His grace and favour.

But the Prayer of Conformity which says: "Not My will but Thine," belongs to a higher level of faith and hope than the Prayer of Petition. It is a higher worship to bend our will to God's than to seek to bend His will to ours; to believe that behind all the pitiless mechanism of Nature, whose grinding wheels no prayer of ours can stay; behind those inexorable all-pervading laws which seem to look to universal, infinitely distant results with a ruthless contempt of the individual; there is at work that tender Love which pities the unfledged sparrow fallen from its nest and numbers the hairs of our head; and to believe that behind such a semblance of aimlessness—of futile flux and reflux, making and marring, order and confusion, plan and counterplan—there is at work that Wisdom

which reaches from end to end, wasting nothing, over-looking nothing, whose hand never falters in the exact fulfilment of its eternal design.

This is the firm faith of those who interpret the world not by mere reasoning from external observation; but by the fulness of their whole inward life which constitutes the greater part of the world of their experience, and that wherein they have most right to look for a revelation of the divine character. To look for it outside alone, were as futile as to study humanity in a corpse.

It needs no little faith to see our own immediate interests sacrificed to laws which look to an absolutely universal and indefinitely future interest, and to believe that in the end we shall save the life which we now lose. But given this trust, who does not see that such submission is a greater worship than the lesser faith that cries, *Transeat Calix:* "Let the cup pass from Me."

Only in a world governed by laws could men be men, *i.e.*, self-helping, self-governing beings. Amid chaos and caprice we should need angels holding us up at every turn in order to exist at all. The love of law grows with the social unselfing instincts that impel us to give ourselves up for the general good. Hence we hold those the more loyal subjects who will not seek dispensations for themselves, but abide by the law unconditionally for sake of public good.

And for a like reason, the Prayer of Conformity is, as a general rule, an index of greater faith, hope, and love than the Prayer of Petition.

Even in matters determinable by petition, there is often more trust in leaving the thing in silence to God, who reads the unspoken desires of the heart.

Yet the Prayer of Conformity is not only an act of resignation; but implies a petition for greater conformity, as well as an effort of self-adaptation to the Divine Will and Law. What we ask and strive for is a change in ourselves rather than in the order of things outside us—namely, the conformity of our will to the irresistible designs of God's universal providence. *Fiat voluntas Tua sicut in Cœlo et in Terra*—is, after all, the prayer of prayers, yet far from demanding any suspense of law, it expresses, and in expressing, deepens our full-hearted assent to God's ways and methods as being surely the wisest and the best, however inexplicable they may seem from our own standpoint.

XLIX.

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER.

But Mary sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His words.—Luke x. 39.

And hence she has ever been taken as a type of the contemplative life; yet not always intelligently. For when we are alone with God in prayer, we do not ordinarily receive streams of revelation as she did who listened with an almost passive mind to the words of the Incarnate Truth. God indeed speaks to us indirectly through the spontaneous or voluntary workings of our mind and affection. Our faculties and our movements are from Him. He

is the Truth known in every truth; the Good loved in every good. But Mary enjoyed an advantage beyond all this, in being fed where we have to feed ourselves, in being carried where we have to walk.

It is therefore somewhat presumptuous for us who are not saints to count on the privileges of those few saints who like Mary have received direct revelation from the lips of Christ; to fancy that the way to prayer is to empty our mind of all contents; to paralyze it by disuse; to withdraw ourselves from all reading, social intercourse, and action, and then, in external solitude and internal vacancy, to hold a one-sided converse with God in which He says nothing and we have nothing to say.

"As I mused," said the Psalmist, "the fire kindled." The end of all contemplative prayer is the kindling of divine love; and the fuel of this flame is the whole world of God's creation and providence—of being and movement; which, when mused upon, reveals to us the underlying love whose expression it is. The more we know of this world by observation, reflection, by social intercourse, and most of all, by action, the more abundant is our store of Love's fuel. We have no visible Christ to heap fuel on the fire for us, but must glean and gather laboriously for ourselves.

Nor is it enough in the interests of prayer to stock our mind with material; for we must also train its powers of reflection, attention, and concentration. How much of our dryness and wandering is due simply to the fact that our minds are

ill-stocked and ill-trained; that we have no suggestiveness or fertility, and no power of meditation; no material to build with, and no skill to construct. As far as we are self-sanctifying and co-operant with grace, and apart from God's free intervention, our idea of God, however simple in the result, is produced by the convergence of many experiences to one point; just as is our idea of any human character. Everything that throws new light upon God and His ways is a new grace, a new occasion of greater love. Hence we must not be like the Buddhist contemplative stupefying our minds even to the bare consciousness of existence; but, remembering that God has made all things good and god-like in some degree, we must ascend from the likeness to the original.

L.

CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION.

But Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and heard His words.—Luke x. 39.

She was not always sitting there, for she was one of those who followed Him and ministered to Him in His own person and in that of the poor and needy; but she realized, perhaps better than Martha, that by duly proportioned alternations, inner and outer activity help one another; that either is impoverished by the undue restriction of the other; that the outer is animated by the inner, and the inner defined, emphasized, and registered in the outer.

To ask which is the greater and more necessary, were to imply a false separation, as though either

were complete without the other; yet undoubtedly the spiritual element—the inner face of action—is the principal; it is the one thing to look to, the *unum necessarium*. As implying a moral judgment, a view of right conduct; in determining the whole attitude of our will and affections; in adding another stone to the structure of that irrevocable past self whose character tells so much on our present and future self, each action finds its reality and chief significance, compared with which its outer bearing is of trivial moment.

What lends its value to another, must itself be more valuable; and our outward action is spiritual and divine just in so far as it is an expression of inward light and love; else it approximates to the lifelessness of a mere fact. The root grows not only with, but because of, the growth of that which springs from it and is its continuation; and similarly our inner and outer life are interdependent and correlated factors of one organic whole; if either interferes with the other, it is because of its unreal and defective character; it is because our contemplation but feeds curiosity or evaporates in sentiment; or because our practical life is fussy, mechanical, precipitate.

Martha seemed to forget the need of this alternation; to attach exclusive value to tangible results; to view contemplation as a mere rest, or even as mere idleness; to forget that it is the spirit of our good works that quickeneth, whereas the flesh profiteth nothing.

But Mary sat and listened. Her attitude of

rest symbolizes a certain restfulness of soul which is the essential condition of inward hearing, a shutting of the memory and attention against the intrusion of distracting interests; a patient expectancy, as of one who having cast his net and done all that can be done, waits tranquilly for what God will send him, not fretting or railing against seeming ill-luck; and—when at times some miraculous draught fills the net to breaking—a quiet contentment with sufficiency that saves one from losing all in grasping all—from congesting the mind with more than it can hold, as though He who has given so liberally, would never give any more.

LI.

SPIRITUAL EQUILIBRIUM.

Simon Peter saith unto them: I go a-fishing. They say unto him: We also go with thee.—John xxi. 3.

The instinct which in seasons of strong emotional preoccupation, whether joyful or sorrowful, bids us turn back to the hypnotizing rhythm and routine of our ordinary avocations, is true to reason. At root it is the same which makes an excitable speaker unconsciously seek relief from the nervous tension under which he is labouring, in some sort of fidgety movement or mechanical idling. The unduly prolonged concentration of the entire energy and attention on any one point of interest wearies out the faculties of perception and emotion so engaged, and weakens the rest by under-exercise. As in hysteria, laughter and tears alternately give

birth each to the other by way of violent reaction, so it is sometimes observed that an unwisely sustained intellectual or contemplative effort prepares the way for an act of reprisal on the part of violated Nature in the form of a rebellion of the senses and lower affections. The worn-out spirit half slumbers for sheer exhaustion and leaves the starved and irritated senses almost as free to run riot as they would be in the state of bodily sleep. "Thou art man," says à Kempis, "and not an angel." The attempt to anticipate the state of the Blessed in Heaven, and to live as the angels who behold the face of the Father, if pushed far beyond metaphor, can only result in singed wings and a disastrous fall into the mire. Had we been meant to live as angels—we should have had the faculties of angels—a God-seeing faculty, and no body to cumber us; Heaven would have been as near to us as earth, as evident as the things we see, touch, and taste. But we are made to walk by faith, not by sight; by inference, not by intuition. We deal with God, for the most part in and through creatures—as identified with them, not as apart from them; and only occasionally, in the explicit exercises of religion and worship, do we treat with Him directly as distinct from and above all creatures.

Thus, though religion should dominate our whole life, it is not our whole life, but only a part—albeit the head and principal part. It need not ordinarily dominate, in the sense of occupying the greater part of our time and attention:—God reserves but

one day in seven;—but in the sense that its claims are paramount and that its obligation in case of conflict take precedence of all others. If it so dominate, then indeed our whole life, so far as it is not counter to religion, may be said to be, implicitly, a continual act of prayer and praise.

But as the body is not all head, so neither should our life be all religion. Neither are the members solely for the sake of the head, nor is the head solely for the sake of the members; but both are directly for the sake of the whole, and indirectly for the sake of each other. Religion is not simply a means to the greater fulness and sanctification of our temporal life; nor is this wholly subordinated to religion. Our natural cares, interests, occupations, and studies do not need to be justified by a direct reference to religion as relaxations, or inevitable interruptions, or necessary ministrations and conditions thereof. They are, of their own right, and co-ordinately with religion, integral though secondary elements in our whole human life.

The organic connection of these co-ordinate factors of our life is such that if one member suffer, the rest suffer with it; and that the undue development of one to the prejudice of the rest on which it depends, eventually issues in the hurt and destruction of that one together with the rest. Religion has therefore everything to gain by the evenly balanced development of those other departments of life over which it should reign, not as a tyrant, but as a constitutional monarch.

An all-round even development of all our capacities is never possible, since many of them are so incompatible, that we must choose one and forego the other. We must fix on some one of the many professions or pursuits of which we are equally capable. Such matters are oftenest determined for us by outward circumstances which will not allow us to choose what would bring out of us the best that is in us. We may not bury the talents that we have been told to use, but God Himself buries most of our talents in the disposition of His Providence.

But even where the matter rests with ourselves, the limits of any one life are too narrow to admit of the successful development of even all those talents whose development is compatible. We must make a selection in such wise as to get as much out of ourselves as circumstances will allow. But though with a view to this, specialization, wholesale exclusion and sacrifice are the conditions of any sort of excellence and fertility; yet there is a point at which one-sidedness and narrowness become deadly. Common-sense suggests that we should make one interest central in respect to the time and attention we give to it; and should develope such others as either minister to it, or else harmonize with it, were it even by way of contrast and difference, so as to preserve the soul's balance.

To make religion not only dominant in point of dignity and influence, but also central in point of time and attention, is a special vocation granted to the few who are drawn to live before God more

consciously and explicitly than others, to give Him their whole mind as well as their whole heart, and who therefore withdraw themselves from the conditions that would make such concentration morally impossible and even indiscrete.

Yet these too, as has been implied, will better consult the interest of contemplation by the adoption of some keen and absorbing interest, practical or speculative, which will preserve them from spiritual lop-sidedness and will, as it were, minister a body for their religion to govern, lest it should be as a head bereft of its subject members.

This principle underlies the ancient Carthusian conception of the Christian life as constituted by a three-fold labour—of heart, mind, and hand—a conception based upon the study of the Gospel, if not actually preserved by unbroken tradition from the earliest days of Christianity. This resolving of life into three main divisions—affection, thought, and action, is practically satisfactory. In each of these realms to have some strong central interest will secure the desired equilibrium of the soul. If religion be the central preoccupation of the heart, it will gain in strength, health, and endurance, if it be balanced by some keen discipline of the mind not directly connected with religion; and both will benefit by some outward work of art, skill, or ministration, which calls mainly upon the bodily powers and the practical intelligence, and not directly upon the intellect or the spirit.

As things are, this three-fold labour is largely put in commission among three classes of society,

to the great detriment of each. We have those whose hands are so ceaselessly exercised that their minds are crippled and their souls stifled. And we have intellect divorced from religion and action, and degenerating into intellectualism. And we have religion neither intelligent nor practical, and out of all sympathy with intellect and labour. Some degree of such specialization is inevitable and even desirable; but when it becomes absolute and complete there is no passage from the mind of one class to that of the other, no common ground of sympathy and understanding between the men of prayer and the men of thought and the men of action; and therefore no possibility of mutual influence—of that give-and-take whereby each class can supply to the others of its superabundance, and receive of theirs.

LII.

VIRGO MATER.

Behold thou shalt conceive and bring forth a Son.—Luke i. 31.

St. Leo in his first Sermon on the Nativity writes: *Ut divinam atque humanam prolem prius mente quam corpore conciperet*—"That she might first conceive in her mind that divine and human offspring which she afterwards conceived in her body."

Some would explain life as a matter of subtle mechanism, or cunning chemistry; as the mere sum of its inanimate conditions and antecedents; they would reduce the higher to terms of the lower, and account for the movements of the substance by those of its shadow. A saner and simpler view sees mind

prior to matter; spirit, the parent of body; idea and conception at the core of every existence and movement. Reason, no less than revelation says: *In principio erat Verbum.* Thought is at the beginning of all things, and without it is nothing made. The world into which we have the clearest insight is that whereof we ourselves are authors, and over which alone we have dominion—the world of our own free thought and action, and the world of human society; and in this world we see the pre-eminence and productive power of the idea; how ideas have been as levers lifting the world off its hinges; how they have gone forth like the Creative Spirit to renew the face of the exhausted earth; like seed increasing and multiplying, replenishing and subduing the land.

And if this social life which we ourselves create and therefore comprehend is the child of thought, conceived in our mind and fostered by energetic love, more readily can we believe the mysterious life whose nature and origin so baffles us, to be the fruit of that Mind which broods over all Nature,—to be from something not less than mind, however infinitely greater.

And thus we are better prepared to hear that some great thought was instrumental in the conception of the God-Man by His Virgin-Mother; that she first conceived Him in her mind, and embraced Him in her affection, before she conceived Him in her womb; that the Holy Ghost, who taught the prophets of old, lifting up here and there a corner of the veil that shrouded the glory of the coming dispensation, came upon her who was the Queen of

Prophets and rending that veil asunder revealed to her the Holy of Holies; that she beheld in that instant, as did none other, the Messianic scheme in its entirety—Christ, and all that grew out of Christ; Alpha and Omega; the seed-sowing and the harvest-home; that she lifted up her eyes to that *Dies Domini* when they that sow in tears shall reap in joy; when the hungry shall be filled, and the lowly exalted, and the mighty put down, and the proud scattered, and the rich sent away empty; when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together; that she saw how this glory could be purchased only by pain, and sorrow, and poverty, and shame, and defeat; by the united sufferings of creation sanctified through and with those of the Man of Sorrows, of whose bitter chalice none should drink more deeply than she. This was the "idea," the great scheme of God's glory and man's bliss which the Holy Ghost revealed to Mary's wondering gaze, and whose realization was conditioned by her faith and love and devotion. And as she gazed her love was kindled—no faltering love like that of Eve, who once in like manner held our destiny in her hand—but a firm, all-embracing love which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things;" and taking upon herself the universal motherhood of miserable man, embracing with her heart what she has conceived in her mind, she cries: "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word." And thus "the Word was made flesh," and the idea became a reality.

And in this act of conception we are all of us partakers in the measure that we understand, enter into, and freely ratify with our whole heart the idea and the ideals of the Incarnation; in the measure that we make the Divine Will in the matter, our own, and say, *Fiat*. But in conceiving and bringing forth Christ in ourselves, we enter even more closely into Mary's chiefest glory. Blessed was the womb that bore His body, and the breasts that gave Him suck; but more blessed was the soul that heard the word of God and kept it, in which Christ realized and reproduced Himself, and lived again His divine life. And in our soul, too, this conception is the fruit of the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost; of the Creative Spirit which, as of old, broods over the dark void of its nothingness and brings forth the Eternal Light; who fertilizes its sterile virginity, and has regard only to its conscious lowliness as to its sole merit. Yet the soul's personality is inviolable. He who made her without her consent, cannot wed her, or save her without her consent; not till she says: "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord," can it be done unto her according to His word.

LIII.

THE IDEAL OF REDEMPTION.

I will set enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed.—Gen. iii. 15.

The notion of Mary as the second Eve is an idea that has struck root in the Christian Church and one from which the whole doctrine of her office in

the scheme of redemption has grown by steady development.

Nor is it only in the mind but in the sentiment and practical devotion of the Church that Mary has taken root and grown. The immaculacy of her conception is but a closer definition of her unique excellence as being the one purely human soul in which God has had His way unimpeded from first to last;—as being the ideal of a fully redeemed humanity—a soul in which God's first thought found full expression, nor needed to be adjusted to subsequent interferences, and obstacles; to which He looked forward from the beginning as a workman looks forward to the furthest and finest fruit of long years of labour, spurred by the thought to patience and endurance—*Ab initio et ante sæcula creata sum et usque ad futurum sæculum non desinam*—"From the beginning and before all ages was I created, nor unto all eternity shall I cease to be."

She is, as the Church sings, the *Turris Draconi impervia*—that close-built fortress without crack or crevice to offer entrance or foothold to the enemy. In us there is by nature and heredity a certain internal responsiveness to the appeal of external temptation which, though not sin, is sinful, and is due to a lack of perfect harmony and balance in the kingdom of our mind and affections—a defect which can be continually diminished if never wholly eliminated. Not that the virtue of Mary or of Christ meant a sort of insensibility to natural stimulus; but that it excluded any undue or irregular sensibility, approaching the nature of vice or irregularity.

This wholeness and soundness of the moral disposition is the secret of that possibility of not sinning—of that ability to stand fast spontaneously and without conscious self-resistance, which characterizes the "just made perfect" on earth; as opposed to the necessity of sinning—to the spontaneous tendency to sin, if once we let ourselves drift, which characterizes the imperfect and the fallen. The former can sin only by cool deliberation and malice; the latter, so far as they are fallen, can go right only by conscious choice and effort. We have to tend ever towards this imperviousness to temptation, this moral healthiness and wholeness; this habit of faultless conscientiousness or immaculacy. A little rift in the robe of our integrity how small soever and the Devil can hook his claw into it and rend it to pieces. Instantly as we recognize the rift let us haste to sew it up; to set ourselves straight with conscience at once; to cry *Peccavi* between the trip and the tumble. There is often less hurt in the sin, than there is in the blank interval between the offence and the reconciliation when we go about remiss and unbraced, with wounds agape, bleeding away our strength. Then it is so often that the haft of the hatchet is thrown after the head; that items are added to the account to be lumped together under one settling, that the penny grows to a pound. Thus, though we cannot imitate the original, inborn immaculacy of Mary, we can set her moral wholeness and integrity before us as an ideal, a pole-star to be followed, though never to be reached; we can make our own soul somewhat of a *Turris Draconi*

impervia—a fortress with high, close-knit, smooth-surfaced walls, the despair of the most adroit assailant of the Woman and her seed.

LIV.

THE LOWLINESS OF HIS HANDMAIDEN.

He hath regarded the humility of His handmaiden.—Luke i. 48.

To those whom we worship we ascribe such qualities and attributes as we most desire; hence the objects we select for veneration, or the praises we offer to those proposed for our veneration, are an index of our own spiritual level.

"The Jews seek a sign; the Greeks wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified." Here we have three stages of spiritual development through which humanity passes in its journey from earth to heaven, from matter to spirit.

Physical prowess, mere immensity of force, or the craft whereby force can be eked out or increased, are what appeal to the awe and admiration of the lowest stages of civilization, whose gods are decorated with such attributes as exalt the warrior to be the tribal chief and ruler. *Dii gentium dæmonia;* the gods of the heathen are devils, *i.e.*, destitute of moral excellence, wonder-workers, magnified sorcerers, fierce, cruel, vengeful, strong.

Then, mind, which in the form of craftiness was first prized merely as instrumental to force, comes to be prized for its own sake as the noblest thing in man; and Apollo and Athene are worshipped for a cold intellectual excellence, void of nearly all moral reference.

Lastly, mind is felt to be subservient to righteousness and love, and God is worshipped more prominently for His goodness than for His wisdom or His power; while it is recognized that, as wisdom and knowledge involve power in a higher form, so the highest love and goodness involve wisdom and knowledge.

And this necessary law of progress is verified in regard to the Christ of Christianity. To grosser and more childish ages, peoples, or individuals, Christ appeals in virtue of His power; to the intermediate period of youth, it is the philosophy or wisdom of His doctrine that speaks His Godhead; to a matured spirituality it is not the earthquake nor the darkness nor the convulsions of nature, but it is the spectacle of Divine Love humbled to death —it is "Christ Crucified," the Power and the Wisdom of God, that appeals as the miracle of miracles forcing it to confess: "This truly is the Son of God."

And similarly as to the appreciation of the Blessed Virgin, the first-fruits and archetype of redeemed humanity. There is little or nothing authenticated as to any display on her part of those excellencies of power or wisdom which appeal to the less discerning part of mankind. Hence those who are blind to the more delicate shades and lines of spiritual beauty are forced to picture her to their own taste, or else to be silent in her praise. What they regard or would regard in God's handmaiden would be best symbolized by crowns and jewels, and cloth of gold and loud-coloured

vesture; and the gaudy, barbaric splendour of Solomon in all his glory. What God Himself looks to and regards in her is something to their eyes quiet, colourless, frail as the lilies of the field that are trampled heedlessly under foot. *Respexit humilitatem*—He hath looked to the humility of His handmaiden; to the lowliness of her self-esteem—not as though she were in anywise ignorant of what God had done for her, of the power with which He had entrusted her, of the wisdom with which He had enlightened her—*Fecit mihi magna:* "He hath done great things for me;" for humility is a truthful self-estimate which neither underrates nor overrates. But comparing herself and her gifts, not with things below, but with things above; not with the "little less" of other creatures, but with God's "infinitely more," all differences between herself and the last and least of mankind were levelled and lost in the deep realization of the nothingness and emptiness of everything when measured with the Eternal and Infinite.

It is by looking ever up instead of down; by going abroad instead of staying at home, that our mind is cured of that narrowness and littleness which is the root of pride. The pomp of the village magnate, the dogmatism of the parish schoolmaster, are the fruit of continual mingling with inferiors in station and learning: whereas a wide culture and extended influence often produce a sort of natural humility—a sense of the mere relativity of our importance, of our absolute insignificance.

And therefore by frequent contact with the

sublime and infinite, with God and Eternity, in prayer and contemplation, the soul is beaten down low with the realization of its nothingness, and at the same time filled with a sense of confident dependence on God, which saves it from a paralysis of depression, and changes what would else be cynical self-contempt into a loving humility. To a soul thus humbled all differences and advantages over others seem ridiculously unimportant, while that self-giving, self-abasing love which is the root of effective and practical humility, teaches it to regard every gift as a mere instrument of service; and to be ambitious of no other greatness than the Divine greatness of self-spending, universal helpfulness.

This is what God looked to in Mary. What do we look to in those we worship and admire? What do we praise in others? For as we are, such will our praise be.

LV.

BREADTH.

Who hath weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. . . . Behold He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. —Isaias xl. 12.

It is well at times to "take wings of fancy and ascend" to God's throne and look down upon the littleness of created things with His eyes; to remember that the value which things bear (and must and ought to bear), to us as great and important, is but relative to the smallness and narrowness of our life.

Yet to dwell ever in so high and rarefied an atmosphere would paralyze our energies; and for the most part it is better for us to yield ourselves to the self-magnifying illusions of our imagination, lest wishing to be as gods we should become as beasts. But to yield ourselves consciously, and not unconsciously, to this illusion, is what saves us from our pettiness; just as the knowledge of our ignorance, and the sense of the inadequacy of our ideas redeem us from utter darkness and blindness. Therefore from time to time we should "consider the heavens" and dwarf ourselves and our little earth by comparison with things sublime and immense, lest we should altogether give, instead of merely lending, ourselves to the play of life in which we must bear our part with a certain outward seriousness, if the tragedy is not to be turned into burlesque. Without some such periodic bracing we shall not reach that divine magnanimity, that imperturbable tranquillity of which it is written: "They that trust in the Lord," that believe in Him as the one absolute reality, beside which all others are shadowy; they that care for Him as the one thing worth taking altogether seriously, "shall be as Mount Sion that shall never be moved;" they shall share God's own mountain-like immobility as regards events and concerns which however relatively serious, are ultimately infinitesimal.

Behind all their clouds they will be ever conscious of this clear, untroubled ether; beneath life's surface storms they will be aware of unfathomed depths of stillness. They will weigh mountains in the

scales and the hills in a balance, and will take up the islands as a very little thing.

"*Qui multo peregrinantur*," says à Kempis, "*raro sanctificantur*"—great pilgrims are rarely great saints; what they gain at the shrine is lost on the road. And yet travel, in some sense of the word, is a necessity for the soul. Its effect is to open the mind and cure its provincialism or parochialism; to convince us of our ignorance and insignificance; for in small surroundings we loom big. Even in a very large empty room we are shrivelled up and begin to long for some cosier apartment of which we shall fill a more appreciable fraction. The field of our total experiences, past and present, seems, like that of our vision, to be of a constant and limited compass; so that as new items are added to the mosaic the rest are crowded together to make room for them. Thus, roughly speaking, a year being, to a child of seven, one-seventh of its total experience, seems ten times longer than to a man of seventy; and he who has now a thousand interests, cares ten times less about any of them, than had he only a hundred.

Hence it is characteristic of those whose experience is narrow, owing to youth or to other circumstances, to lose that sense of proportion which is gained by viewing things, not from a personal, parochial, or national, but from an historical and more universal standpoint. To travel through humanity, past and present; to view things as they constitute part of that universal experience, gives us a most valuable aspect of truth. Yet

after all, it is but one, even if a more important aspect, and it needs to be complemented by the other and narrower aspect. If an event, relatively to humanity, is truly small; relatively to me it is none the less truly great; and only God, who can keep both the universal and the particular aspects co-present to His gaze, can judge events altogether justly. And even in the case of the widest outlook of which we are capable, events seem immeasurably larger than they would from the standpoint of the infinite, whence they would vanish into nothingness for minds constituted as ours are.

Thus the effect of a too great largeness of view is often weakening and enervating, except when the faculty of concrete imagination is relatively strong. Indecision and hesitancy characterizes a mind with more information than it can comfortably grapple with—which sees a thousand sides to every question, and range after range of mountainous difficulties stretching away into the future; nor can it ever possess that concentrated strength of affection and interest, that intensity and enthusiasm of which a certain narrowness seems the indispensable condition. For little creatures like ourselves narrowness is the lesser evil; for if we go too far from ourselves we shall perchance lose ourselves in the dreary void of the infinite. Life is love and action, and these are paralyzed by distraction and indecision. For they deal with the concrete and particular. But, with us, to be broad and comprehensive means leaving the concrete and particular for the abstract and general. For we are men and

not gods. It is the pent-up steam that does work; not that which escapes; and since sanctification means intensity and enthusiasm, he will rarely be a saint who travels too much. Yet neither will he who travels too little; for man has a measure in reference to which "broad" and "narrow" have a true meaning, the one good and the other evil.

LVI.

NARROWNESS.

Enter ye in at the strait gate.—Matt. vii. 14.

There are broad and narrow ways of thinking and acting. Narrowness is a term of reproach; so that we usually affect "breadth," however much we all lack it. Yet Christ seems to censure wide, roomy ways of thought and life; and moreover it is accepted generally that there is a certain safety in narrowness: "good people" are usually more or less narrow, not only with that voluntary narrowness which is implied in all concentration of energy and decision of purpose, and is simply a necessary mortification of rejected possibilities in the interest of that which has been accepted; but often by a sort of inborn narrowness which is the cause rather than the effect of their goodness. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God" seems to have its application here as well.

Again, the same anti-liberal disposition which cleaves naturally to tradition, customs, and precedent, and refuses to discuss moral or religious problems on their own intrinsic merits, is very

conducive to uniformity of conduct, and thereby to depth or stability of habit. It helps much to decision and energy in well-doing to believe in sharply defined lines between truth and error, good and evil; to believe that there is no truth outside one's own creed or school; no good whatever in worldly or irreligious people; to feel that there is everything to be said for one side, and nothing at all for the other; whereas resolution is often relaxed by the decay of this almost tribal instinct, this firm faith in conventional judgments, as a substitute for which, our own dim intuition of things, not, as they are said to be, but as they really seem to ourselves, is feeble and ineffectual.

If then all men tend to an excess either of conservatism or of liberalism, the virtuous will in the main be found in the former class. But none the less, nothing is more strikingly characteristic of Christ's own teaching and practice than its breadth and charitable comprehensiveness. If He was intolerant of anything it was of intolerance;—of the censorious Pharisee; of the tyrannical priest; of the pedantic scribe; of the hair-splitting lawyer and moralist; of the materialistic and literal, as opposed to the catholic and spiritual, interpretation of God's law. Yet He tells us that the path to the higher and eternal life of the spirit is narrow and hard to find; whereas the wide and easy path leads down to spiritual death.

The eternal life of the soul is the life of the higher thoughts and affections—the life of truth and love; and it is a matter of reason and common-

sense that all darkness and error is some kind of narrowness, some lack of experience, some unwillingness or inability to look truth in the face. It is because we never see all things together, but must always treat what is only a part as though it were a complete self-explanatory whole, that the broadest human view is narrow, inadequate, and to some extent positively misleading—so that all our truths are necessarily alloyed with error, and will ensnare whoever does not recognize the fact. And, as regards the affections, are they not dwarfed, perverted and even exterminated by narrowness, by selfishness of every kind? Is not breadth of sympathy, catholicity of taste, comprehensiveness of love, the very essence of eternal life?

Plainly then, though eternal life means a certain breadth and expansion of the soul, yet the path that leads to it is narrow, and few there be that find it. Narrowness of mind and heart is as easy as selfishness and ignorance; the way that leads to that spiritual death is wide, easy, and down-hill, and many there be that go in thereat. Truth and goodness alike consist in a certain mean, in a difficult and delicate adjustment of the motives of belief and action. The path to life is along a narrow ridge from which it is easy to slip down on one side or the other, towards the contrary extremes of laxity or rigorism.

The former is the easier and more perilous slope and is thronged by those whose life consists, not of action and self-movement, but of passive drifting, along the current of inclination, — believing or

denying, doing or not doing, according as less resistance is needed for one or the other; and also by those fewer who throw energy into their sin; who rush down the slope to destruction like the devil-possessed swine of Gadara.

The contrary incline is occupied by the well-meaning and ill-judging multitude of those who find it so much *easier* to live by hard-and-fast unqualified rules of right belief and right conduct, than by a just and elastic application of living principles to each particular and individual case. What confirms them in their obduracy is, the consciousness that they are going against nature and overcoming themselves, and their belief that the harder way is the better or at least the safer.

Yet if they would but try, they might find something as much harder than narrowness, as narrowness is than looseness. "It is easier to keep silence altogether than not offend in speech;" and indeed everywhere total abstinence is easier than temperance. But it is not always better or as good. "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world," says Christ of His Apostles, "but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil." Indeed, far from being the safer, the rigid way is often the more dangerous, as leading to strong reactions of disgust and rebellion on the part of violated nature; and as at best cramping that natural expansiveness of the soul, which is the essential condition of its life.

As in the fine arts, so in the art of life, the right way is high, difficult, and narrow, and few there be, if any, that find it. Left to ourselves we all slip

down the easier slope; and if grace for a moment raise us to the summit, we slip down the other. But He has come to show to all the Narrow Way, and to make the lost secret, common property. "I am the Way," He says, "and the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh to the Father but by Me."

LVII.

LIBERTY FOR OTHERS.

Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not.—Rom. xiv. 3.

Though few desire real liberty, there is an element of liberty that all naturally desire. A man lost in the middle of the Sahara desert is not so free as a galley-slave chained to his oar, since the latter has the needful conditions for a certain limited degree of life; while the former is face to face with extinction. Yet it is something not to be coerced by another will than our own. Be such coercion just or unjust, the first instinct of our will is to resent it and rebel against it. Perfect freedom is doubtless his whose mind and heart are so attuned to just law, divine and human, as to obey without friction or sense of thwart; and who moreover lives in an ideal world where every law is just and divine. But even in such a soul it is not submission to just compulsion that satisfies and frees, but the conviction that the occasion for such compulsion will never arise; since perfect love has cast out fear and its torment. Hence the hatred of being tied down is natural and right, since it is our final destiny to be freed from such friction and coercion. It is this instinct which

angers us against any attempt to advise or persuade us even to some course of conduct which else we had freely chosen; which makes us hesitate to commit ourselves to some one out of many possible lines of action, and thereby to put the alternatives out of our reach for ever; which make us feel our most voluntary engagements an intolerable burden as soon as they are entered upon; which prompts us to puzzle people by unexpected and freakish turns of word and action, lest knowing the laws and uniformities of our conduct, they should be able to manage us secretly and play upon the several keys of our character at will.

Like the love of money, or of any other means of life, this love of being "let alone" and not interfered with, becomes, if over-indulged, an unreasoning passion; the end being forgotten in the eager pursuit of the means. Few love liberty for justice' sake, and simply that they and others indifferently may lead the best and fullest life; and many love licence in their hearts and call it liberty with their lips; but most love non-interference for its own sake without a thought of the end for which it should be desired; just as we often love to hurry through work, and to struggle for an unlimited ocean of leisure, without the faintest notion of what is to be done with the leisure when secured. All occupation is embittered by a secret sense of an infinity of alternatives and incompatible occupations which are excluded; for, if to be idle is to enjoy none of them actually, it is at least to be at liberty to enjoy any of them.

That we mostly love non-interference for its own

sake, or for our own sake, and not for justice' sake, that is, not from that disinterested love of order as an absolute good—is clear from our readiness to interfere with others in order to secure fuller freedom for ourselves. We resent having the mind and will of another imposed as the norm of our own: but we would enforce our own notions and tastes on everyone else.

This desire to bring all others round to our way of thinking and acting is also a natural and useful instinct—one of the cohesive forces of society; and its absence is a grave defect; but it is a very subordinate principle of conduct, needing often to be checked and over-ridden by many another and better. The social organism requires a nice adjustment of uniformity and variety; since an excess of the one means petrification; of the other, disintegration. And so in the Christian Church there are certain established points of faith that are held in common by all; but beyond, there is a region of opinion and free speculation as to matters in regard to which the Church's mind is still unformed; and were no liberty tolerated in that region, there would be no variety of conflicting opinions illustrating and explaining one another, each holding an element of that full truth which is eventually to be accepted and appropriated as a development of the body of dogmatic teaching.

Again, there are obligatory practices common to all Christians, but a still wider region of individual variations in regard to which a wise liberty and mutual toleration should be maintained. Doubtless

many of the existing uniformities and obligations were selected, by reason of their proven utility, from the mass of local and particular observances, and extended to the Universal Church. To suppress variations would be to suppress growth. Hence we should be as jealous for liberty as for law, since they are co-principles of social life; we should be indignant against unauthorized dogmatism—doctrinal or practical—in matters where the Church has left us free.

For example, as regards the greater or lesser frequenting of the Sacraments, the usage of the Church has differed immensely in different ages and countries; and Saints have been formed on both systems; nor can we say that there has ever been a steady progress towards the present frequency, since this is but a revival of the most primitive practice. The truth is that, frequency is but one condition of fruitfulness, and fervour is the other; so that in some sense it is indifferent whether we go frequently and fairly well, or rarely and very well; whether we replenish our cup after every sip or wait till it is nearly empty; we do not drink more on one system than on the other. Outward circumstances often determine the matter for us; still more should we consult our mental temperament. For some, frequency begets routine and formalism; for others it secures the stability of habit; some can only snatch now and then the inner or outer leisure needed for that concentration which their sense of reverence demands in approaching the Sacraments; others, owing to the evenness of

their mind and circumstances, can keep themselves always at, or near, the necessary level of recollection.

Doubtless in each age or locality there is an established average of frequency,—once a month, or once a week, or four times a year; and one should so far respect that rule as not to depart from it notably without positive reason; but such reasons so abound, that we must leave men full liberty to go much more frequently or much less frequently without daring to rank them spiritually by the frequency of their communions. Wherefore "let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; nor let him that eateth not, judge him that eateth. He that eateth, eateth in the Lord and giveth thanks; and likewise he that eateth not;" *i.e.*, both have a good reason for what they do, and glorify God in opposite ways. We can go to Heaven by sea, as well as by land. "Who art thou that judgest another? To his own Maker he standeth or falleth." These words are the too easily forgotten *Magna Charta* of Christian liberty. "In God's house are many mansions," and there is room for all sorts and conditions of men, even for the most unlikely and unimaginable.

LVIII.

INTROSPECTION.

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.—Matt. vi. 28.

The immediate purport of these words is to forbid all anxiety as to temporal affairs, all needless and futile carefulness which strives to foresee and

provide for what is quite beyond all human foresight and control. We can plough and sow and irrigate, but the weather is in God's hands, nor can we by taking thought hasten the mysterious process of growth or determine the ratio of increase. Having done our part, a certain Stoical indifference as to the future, is not fatalism but faith. *Sortes meæ in manu tua sunt:* "My destinies are in Thy hands," nor could they be in better. But no less in regard to the spiritual life is anxiety reprehensible. We can watch and pray and co-operate, but the rain of God's softening graces and the sunshine of His light and consolation rest with His will; or if there be a fixed law of their distribution it is beyond our ken, hidden away in God's heart; nor can we for all our straining, our anxiety, our impatience, add a single inch to our soul's stature.

Quomodo crescunt. Consider how they grow. Growth and increase of every kind is an impenetrable mystery which use has robbed of its appeal to our wonder. We know the fact; we observe and define certain of its conditions; but its inner necessity is hidden for ever from our guesses. As an event whose cause is unimaginable and unthinkable we might call it a "miracle," were it not so familiar. But use makes us think it necessary and natural that a stone unsupported should fall to the earth for no apparent cause; and would make us cry "miracle!" were it to remain inertly suspended in mid-air as, for all we can see, it ought to. Perhaps growth

seems less marvellous, less to be considered, because we vaguely explain it to ourselves as a sort of building-up process by which the several parts give birth to the whole—a feeble analogy which tries to force the greater into the form and mould of the less; which forgets that in a growth it is the whole which gives birth to the parts; that it is a building which builds itself, and repairs itself, and multiplies itself.

"It cometh up we *know not how*" and never shall know; we can devise no improvements of the laws of growth nor deduce from them any method or art of growth. Still less in the spiritual order, do we understand how truth and light grow in the mind, or goodness and love in the heart. "The wind bloweth where it listeth and ye hear the sound thereof, but whence it cometh ye know not and whither it goeth who can tell? So is every one that is born of the Spirit." The signs and effects, the conditions and antecedents of such growth, may be partially determined, but God alone gives or withholds the increase. Here too, we confound conditions with causes; we use mechanical figures and metaphors; we invent plans, and routines and methods. We appoint times for God's free visitations; we fix His inspirations down on paper, we try by every means to cage the Divine Spirit and keep it under control for our own use, as we cage the wild forces of nature and press them into our service. "The wind bloweth where it listeth;" so it seems to us; yet not really

"where it listeth;" for it is passively determined by physical laws; but God's Spirit is free, active, self-determining. If we would breathe, we need but open our mouth and draw in our breath: *Os meum aperui et attraxi spiritum;* the atmosphere presses in on every side and at all times. Not so with the breath of supernatural life, for there, there are two free-wills to be reckoned with, and not merely one; there is a giving on God's part, as well as a receiving on ours; and when we have made all ready for His reception we must wait for the Guest; two have to agree as to place and time and measure of inspiration. We cannot sit down when we will, and have bright intuitions and ardent desires. At prayer-time we are most often barren and distracted; and perhaps at work or abroad, belated grace comes interrupting us with unsolicited suggestions and eager inspirations. We can indeed sow the seed of truths already received from God; we can dispose ourselves to catch the first glimmer of light; we can reach out our hand for the alms; we can let down our net for the draught; but our labour neither conditions nor coerces, nor even measures, the Divine response.

"Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these;" and all our self-devised artificial glory and perfection, as compared with the natural beauty of God's handiwork, is as vulgar, pretentious, and unreal, as the gaudy splendour of some semi-barbarous Oriental monarch. Consider the lilies of the field and the array which God's

fingers have woven for them. In them He lives, and works His way unimpeded; in them He freely utters the word which from eternity He has conceived, willed, and loved in regard to them. He has not to stand at the door and knock, but finds the entrance ever wide open.

But we, self-forming, self-determining creatures, can obstruct the free flow of the sap that rises in our spiritual veins at seasons of spring-time and renewal,—not only by sin, which shuts the door in God's face; but by false solicitude; by mistaking conditions for causes; by over-trust in methods, devices, and industries. We are as an impatient, self-confident learner who runs ahead of his teacher and spoils the task; forgetting that unless God build up the house of our sanctity, our labour is in vain; unless He watch over the citadel of our soul, our watchfulness is fruitless self-wearying.

Or again, we can interfere by spiritual vanity; by seeking graces and virtues as objects of personal adornment which minister to our self-complacency. The common phrase: "To adorn the soul with virtues," has a false ring about it; and savours more of Stoicism than of Christianity. It may be the wisest and noblest self-interest to prefer virtue to wealth or honour or any other possession; but to seek it as a possession and as a personal adornment is to make a creature of the Creator—a means of what should be the end,—a possession of that by which we should be possessed; which we should serve and worship and honour. "Virtue"

(cold pedantry for Divine Love, or the Love of the Divine) is God dwelling in the soul and taking full possession of it.

And may there not be even a still more vulgar love of display, half-unconsciously stimulating our quest of perfection; not perhaps anything so ugly as hypocrisy, which would seek unmerited praise; but a desire for merited praise more keen than the desire for merit—a desire like that which was satisfied in King Solomon when the Queen of the South, drawn to him from afar by the trumpet-call of his fame, fainted at the sight of a splendour so transcending her wildest imaginings. Subtle and all-permeating love of worship, lurking deep down in the heart of the saintly solitary who has buried himself for ever from the knowledge of his fellow-men! Part of our God-given, ineradicable social instinct, whereby we are knit together in love and mutual regard and taken out of our narrowness and false independence; yet a spring of action so easily disordered—so difficult to regulate and correct! In itself a constitutive and essential part of humility and charity; yet the very substance out of which pride and selfishness are fashioned.

How then do they grow, these lilies of the field —these miracles of, what we might irreverently call, God's infinite good taste?

Not by reflex conscious effort; not by measuring their rate of growth hour by hour and day by day; not by tearing themselves up by the very roots and transplanting themselves, now here, now there, in

obedience to every fidgety suggestion of self-improvement. How then? We know not how; for it is God's care and concern, and not ours. We know that they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet that Solomon in all his barbaric glory was not arrayed as one of these divine miracles of beauty —so common, so countless, that we trample them heedlessly under foot as of no account.

LIX

DIVINE SELF-GIVING.

Yea, gladly will I spend and be spent for you, though the more I love you the less I be loved.—2 Cor. xii. 15.

Undoubtedly it is the very nature of love to crave a return. But it is no less evident that to love is its own reward; that life consists in loving and self-giving; that were one loved and worshipped by all, he would be but as a stock or a stone, "of all men the most miserable," did he not love. It would seem as though (in higher beings at least) the craving to be loved were created by the recognition of the fact that the lover cannot give what the beloved cannot receive; that he cannot feed one who is not hungry, nor clothe one who is not naked; that he cannot, in a word, satisfy an appetite or fill a void that has no existence. Such a craving to be loved is perhaps more other-regarding than self-regarding. Yet, in another sense, to love without being loved back, is a more complete self-squandering, a more generous exercise of love; and thus it is that God

delays to kindle greater love of Himself in our hearts, that one day we may look back and say: "Behold how He loved us! even when we were yet sinners and slighted or did not care for Him. Behold how He kissed and embraced us in an ecstasy of love, time after time, in the Sacred Communion; how He poured Himself into us, poured His Blood into our veins; and mingled His pure flesh with our sinful flesh in sacramental mysteries; thus both figuring and realizing that passionate love whereby He humbles Himself to become the food of the soul He has created, that they may be two in one." If now He suffers the inflowing tide of His love to be withstood, it is that later the heaped-up waters may burst in with all their accumulated force and sweep away every obstacle from their path; and that thus He may, in the event, be able to spend and be spent for us more lavishly, than had we never resisted His grace.

Hence He says: "I have greatly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," and, of that suffering: "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!" We look upon the Eucharist too much from our own side, as if it were simply the satisfaction of our need; and we forget that, in a mysterious sense, it is the satisfaction of the Divine need, of God's own hunger and thirst, of that love which strains and bursts the walls of the Divine Heart; and pours itself out over all creatures, more gladly where the gift is more gratuitous and less merited.

LX.

THE GOVERNING AIM.

Seek Him in the singleness of your heart.—Wisdom i. 1.

When we set before ourselves some distant end to be attained, some ambition to be realized, we confusedly embrace in that same act of will the whole connected system of means, the entire process by which it is to be accomplished. And similarly in the accomplishment of each several step we are governed, at least confusedly, by the "intention" of the whole process—by the endurance of that act of will. We may perhaps at times consciously and deliberately do some act which implies that we have changed or modified our intention, and which, of its own nature, makes for some incompatible end, and alters the direction of our will for the time being. Else every single action belonging to the connected series from first to last involves an implicit renewal of the primary resolve, and is, so to say, an abortive or imperfect attempt to bring the entire conception to birth.

Many of our free actions, however, can lie outside the system of actions connected with some partial and particular end; but not one lies outside the system of actions connected with the one universal end to which each life is necessarily directed. And by this end we do not mean that abstract beatitude or well-being, after which we all equally and necessarily grope in every action, but the concrete object, or state, or mode of life in

which each of us freely places his ultimate happiness and primary satisfaction—whether it be religion, or philanthropy, or conscientiousness, or pre-eminence, or luxury, or passivity, or extinction, or some combination of these and similar elements. Every free act, that is, every act which is a true expression of our deepest self, and is not merely reflected from the surface or from some less fundamental layer of our personality; which is not merely automatic, instinctive, imitative—either creates, or rectifies, or negatives, or modifies, our practical attitude towards life as a whole; it is an aborted attempt to realize a certain conception of ourselves; of our ideal state; to bring to full effect that general will which is behind this particular action and animates it—as it were the vital principle of the seed. The full interpretation of each single free action would reveal to us the outgrowth of this seed. We cannot move in two directions at once; we may deflect from our course with a mind to turn back to it later, but for the moment it is abandoned.

The whole life of our will is as that of the agitated needle seeking its pole; and, ideally, it should be marked by a steady decreasing range of oscillation, and by an ever nearer approach to the precision of truth. Each good choice should prepare the way for a better. Every step towards our ideal should show it to us more closely and clearly; should expand and articulate our conception of it; should reveal to us more distinctly the implicit content of our governing will, and

explain to us that want, which we *felt* long before we could understand or express it. It is for lack of this clearness and precise determination that, with the best will in the world, we must swing to this side or that of the true mark and never find complete rest; though we can indefinitely narrow the limits wherein it is to be sought.

This is the way of the Saints; but with others there is no such steadiness of approximation. Yet if we do not raise and improve our ideal in every free act we either reassert it, or else, alter it, wholly or in part. At one time, it is such an act as makes for God and for God only—for the purest and divinest life of the soul; but presently perhaps our conduct implies that, though God is chief in our regard He does not fill up our cup of happiness to the brim, that we also need something that is loved not for His sake or in connection with Him. Later perhaps, our action means that God holds a minor part of the field of our ideal of perfect life—that He is loved sincerely up to a certain point, worshipped with costly sacrifices, but not loved supremely,—much less, loved alone or worshipped with the sacrifice of our best or of our all.

At other times this irreverence may extend to an almost complete exclusion of God and the divine mode of life from our scheme of happiness.

We are perhaps too apt to look upon our will as a sort of ledger of separate resolutions, kept up to date by erasures and additions; and to forget that it is simply our inmost present self viewed as actively tending towards its end or ideal; as

growing into the self that it wants to become. It is not a bundle of separate potential energies—each a little will in itself with reference to this matter or that, moving freely and separately from the rest, like fingers of the same hand; but it is one simple force, ever in act,—shaped and directed, if you will, by each particular choice, but asserting its whole self with all these modes and shapings, in each several action.

Every movement of the past has left its mark upon it and helps to characterize this present act, which in its turn will be built into the fabric. As every experience added to our mind alters the character of our mental reaction in regard to every future experience,—causing us to receive it otherwise than we should else have received it; so with our action, the whole past is contained in every present, not indeed determining, but characterizing it. An opportunity of well-doing or evil-doing, outwardly the same, is inwardly different as presented to this character or to that; it "becomes" or "misbecomes" in a different way and degree. To take or to reject it, is free to both, and is not necessitated by their antecedents; while the nature and number of such graces and temptations, from which the character may be built up and by which it is fed, is in the hands of God; so that we never can predict what He is going to make of us,—though we have the refusal or acceptance of His plans.

LXI.

AIMLESSNESS.

He shall be as a tree planted by the waters' edge. . . . Not so the wicked, but rather, as dust before the face of the wind.—Ps. i. 3.

The tree is made from the dust which the wind scatters; and to the dust it returns when the principle of its organic unity is destroyed. There is no free finality, no cohesion, in the life of passion and inclination,—in the life of one who drifts along aimlessly and passively like dust before the wind, determined wholly from without, yielding to the stronger impulse on the one side, and the lesser resistance on the other. The movement of such a life is a process of dissolution and decay, not of construction and growth. Yet though possessing no system or self-determined end, and even denying the existence or possibility of such, the moral sceptic cannot escape the necessity of living for happiness and of electing the kind of life which he thinks will secure it, although it be a life of chaos and doubt and nothingness. By a sort of faith and not by experience (which would need to be infinite in order to verify the judgment), he judges all to be "vanity of vanities," and because he believes reason and system to be illusions, he turns from them in the quest of the truer happiness which he falsely imagines to lie in utter aimlessness.

But he who believes that life has an end and meaning; and who seeks that end in God (*i.e.*, in moral rectitude and reasonableness,) brings organic unity out of the confusion of conflicting passions

and impulses. The body of his moral life is inspired and quickened by the rational end to which all its parts are directed and subordinated. He is like the living tree planted firmly by the waters' edge—stable, coherent, self-governing, and progressive; drawing full draughts of life from the Source of life in which the root-fibres of his spiritual being are continually bathed. Let that source be dried up, and slowly but surely the process of decay sets in and he becomes as dust scattered before the wind—aimless, passive, incoherent, fruitless.

Nor is this less true of societies than of individuals. There too order and law mean life and liberty; while the lawlessness of tyranny on the one side and of rebellion and injustice on the other, preludes disintegration and ruin. So, for example, the Church Catholic, with her organic unity of doctrine and structure, contrasts with the sects which crumble to dust by division and subdivision, whereas she is like a tree planted by the river-brink yielding fruit in due season, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

LXII.

SELF-MANAGEMENT.

You say to them: Go in peace: be ye warmed and filled: yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body. —James ii. 16.

Nothing would frighten timorous consciences more than to tell them that some of their temptations are of their own making and could be easily

avoided; for at once they would understand that they were morally responsible for them, which they are not. They could avoid them if they knew how; if they understood better the laws that govern their own mind; if they were more observant of their own character. Psychological ignorance is at the root of the evil; they do not know how to manage their own minds; just as men are often ailing because they do not know how to manage their own bodies. In simpler times men ascribed their diseases to the devil, and not to their own ignorance and indiscretion; and this same simplicity survives in regard to many temptations and spiritual diseases. Some day no doubt moralists will wake up to the value of much of our modern practical psychology and apply it to the guidance of souls. At present, beyond a bundle of rough-and-ready empirical maxims, often mutually contradictory, they have no way of mediating between the knowledge and the performance of duty. As moralists, of course, their office ends with the former; and they assume that when the right path is determined, it is a mere question of *will*, to walk in it. For directors, the management of the will is really a greater concern: yet how often they take the line of saying: "You can if you like, and if you do not, it is because you do not want to:"—as though one should say to a man who first mounts a restive horse: "Look how others stick on! You can do the same if you choose." He can, through the mediation of knowledge, experience, guidance, observation; but not at once,—not in his present

untaught state. Prayer and the sacraments are intended to increase the *desire* to do well, to quicken our industry in using all means thereto; but they do not impart definite instruction as to how the difficult task of self-education is to be carried out. Hence, in every form of Christianity besides the mere declaration of the law of righteousness, and besides urgent persuasion and exhortation to fulfil it, some informal attempt is made to mediate between the will and the deed, to show *how* the law of the members may be brought into conformity with the law of the mind.

But the science of self-management is still in the state in which medicine was in the days of Galen and Hippocrates. It may be contended that the old rough-and-ready methods of knife and cautery gave better results by weeding out the feeble, who were killed when not cured; but this contention can hardly be urged when it is a question of soul-slaughter.

And sometimes it can scarcely be less. We should punish a child for meddling ignorantly with the complicated mechanism of a watch; and the law will punish a man who, without a medical diploma, should meddle with the infinitely more complex and valuable mechanism of the human frame. But far greater is the danger of ministering to minds diseased, whose complexity excels that of the body, as the body's does that of the watch.

Granted the most perfect power of self-analysis and self-expression on the one side, and the most perfectly experienced intelligence and sympathy on

the other, are we not, at the best, groping in the dark, and ought we not for that reason to be most sensitively delicate in our touch? Surely the best we can do is to impart the science of self-diagnosis and self-management, as we should to a sick man walled away from all help in some impenetrable dungeon. Saints and Prophets may claim to read the secrets of hearts and to share the Divine insight into the hidden springs of life. Such men can offer a sort of guidance to souls wholly beyond the capacity of ordinary mortals, who must trust simply to observation, experience, and intelligence, and give up all reliance on gifts and graces of a purely exceptional and semi-miraculous character. In the absence of a prophet, the right or wrong of any particular case has usually to be settled by each one for himself. Others can give rules and principles, advice and experience; they can help us to make up our mind, but they cannot and ought not to decide for us; for their decision is necessarily abstract and leaves out of account the all but infinite multitude of circumstances that characterize each individual action in the concrete.

But all this emphasizes the necessity of bringing the science of self-management into definite shape; of not trusting to hap-hazard empirical nostrums: of listening to all that recent observation and research has verified concerning the interdependence of mind and body, and the laws by which their several operations are governed. If much be still hypothetical and dubious, far more is firmly established than we have yet taken any practical

account of. We love the old grooves—the rhythm of ancient maxims and oracles; and we wonder and deplore that prayers and sacraments and exhortations fail to do what they were never meant to do, namely, to take the place of vigilance, observation, and common sense; to connect the good desires, which it is their function to create and foster, with their outward fulfilment; to bring the law of the members into conformity with the law of the mind, and to bridge over the gulf that divides right ethics from right action.

LXIII.

THE SOCIAL STANDARD AND THE MORAL.

Judge not before the time.—2 Cor. iv. 5.

It is not sufficiently observed by moralists, ascetics, and directors to how large an extent many virtues involve and depend on gifts that are purely mental, or physical or at least non-moral. Ingratitude, for instance, may be the result of a forgetfulness which shows itself in a hundred other ways in the same individual. Cruelty may be due to lack of imagination and consequently of sympathy. Courage is often the result of inexperience or obtuseness. Hence, at different stages of mental and social development, different virtues are rendered possible, and the only common universal virtue under which these particulars are subsumed, and by reason of which they are praiseworthy, is the love of righteousness and the hatred of iniquity. Apart from this ingredient, it is almost impossible to discern moral from merely psychological good

qualities. The lover of righteousness will strive honestly to judge correctly in moral matters, and to give effect to his judgments; but the measure of his success will not necessarily be proportioned to his effort, but will depend on the amount of social enlightenment to which he is heir; on his own intellectual acumen: on his training and education: and finally on an incalculable multitude of external circumstances.

This distinction between the social or utilitarian standard of goodness, and the divine standard by which each man shall be judged at the last, cannot be kept too clearly in view in face of the surface difficulty presented by the existence of ethically degraded populations at home and abroad, whose units are deprived of the support of a healthy public opinion and example, — a support to which the respectable and religious owe nine-tenths of their respectability and religion. The force of tradition and example playing on the instinct of docility and imitation is what determines the greater part of our conduct. Even though we react from within, in response to these determinations from outside, it is seldom from the central core of our personality, but mostly from some layer or other of the enveloping cortices. Instinct, habit, passion, mimicry, convention, hold the reins, save in those rare moments when the buried self wakes up to seize them in some crisis or another. Like a sunken rock, it is only when the waves run mountain-high that it reveals itself—in storms and stresses that call forth all that is in a man, proving him as gold is proved in

the furnace, baptizing him with a baptism of blood.

Send the rabble from our slums into the battle-field where duty is plain to the dullest, and as exacting and costly as it is plain, and is the average of heroism and self-sacrifice appreciably different between class and class? It is only the piercing sword that can reveal the thoughts of the heart And so we are warned by the Friend of publicans and sinners, who knew what was in man — the latent goodness of the bad, and the latent badness of the good—that our social standard is not the ultimate or the highest: that the first shall be last, and the last first.

But this truth were altogether mischievous and decadent without its complement. If goodness of will is everything it is because it involves a will and ceaseless effort to find out what is objectively right; to bring the machinery of habit and inclination into agreement with the dictates of reason; to create and develope a sound standard of public opinion and example; to secure all the non-moral conditions of morality, both for ourselves and for others! For to be zealous about the end and indifferent about the means is a palpable insincerity, entirely inconsistent with good-will.

LXIV.

SOME PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES.

The Wisdom of the Prudent is to understand his way.—Prov. xiv. 8.

As illustrative of the preceding paragraph we may notice how largely the virtue of purity is a

matter of self-management guided by a knowledge of the laws that govern our thoughts and feelings; how it is not only a thing to pray for; but a thing to be taught and learnt.

It is more than nine-tenths a virtue of the imagination or heart; not only because nearly all bodily temptation is dependent on certain images and associations with which it comes and goes, increases and diminishes, and through which alone it is encouraged or resisted; but also quite apart from images, memories, and fancies — directly or indirectly suggestive,—there are certain illusions, fears, fixed ideas, which have to be banished in the interests of purity. The very fear of the temptation suggests the vivid idea of the reality, and this is but one step from the reality itself. Hence a nervous dread of temptation is often the worst temptation; and the scrupulous are troubled, where the unscrupulous are left in peace.

Again: "expectant attention" is a further degree of the same illusion; for it means not only the fear, but the certainty, that the temptation will occur; and therefore almost infallibly ensures its occurrence.

Again, the pleasure-value and pain-value of things looked back upon or looked forward to, is dependent almost entirely on imagination. Things affect our will according as we *believe* them to be pleasant or unpleasant; not according to the actual degree of pleasure with which they affect our senses. Nay, even in the fruition, most of our pleasure is due to imagination, rather than to sense—to association,

to prospect or retrospect, or to a *believed* (as opposed to a *verified*) valuation of the enjoyment. Faith in the social estimate makes a snail a physically revolting article of diet to the Englishman and a dainty to the Frenchman; we eat rottenness with complacency, if convention declares it to be good; and are sickened by absolutely imperceptible ingredients in our food, which the same authority declares to be disgusting. It is not what things *are* to us, but what we *believe them to be* to us, that matters. And this belief is not only created for us by others, but is largely in our own power to create. Nay, even by repeated verbal assertion we can persuade ourselves into, or out of, many likes or dislikes; and can correct one illusion by another. And this principle is very largely true with regard to sensuality, where the real, as opposed to the illusory and imaginative, element of pleasure, is often incredibly small.

Again, we cannot attempt what we fixedly believe to be impossible. Belief in our possession of power will not create power that is not there, but if it be there it will liberate it and bring it to act where else it were dormant, and as good as absent. Hence the value of self-confidence, and the use of encouragement. Every doctor knows what suggestion can do, whether to paralyze or to invigorate; and in moral matters the same law prevails. The fixed idea that we cannot control our imagination, our feelings, our movements; that we are "possessed" by some alien power, or that we are the victims of some morbid condition, is often the sole and only reason why we

cannot, and do not. Sometimes, moreover, this false conviction is the result of a certain "wish to believe,"—of a half-desire to be tempted, and to be helpless against temptation. The cure is, to wake up clearly to the illusory character of this hysterical impression; and to make acts of faith in our perfect freedom from obsession; to face boldly the deep-down conviction that we could have resisted had we chosen—a conviction we are in the habit of shirking and blinking.

Once more: to believe that we want to conquer, and that we can conquer, is not enough, unless we also believe that we are in fact going to conquer; and this third conviction is the most important, since it will bring to act anything that is in our power, even though it be something we do not want, as in cases of "fascination" where the idea of doing something horrible absorbs our whole interest and becomes so vivid as to pass into act. The mental side of every conscious act consists in forming a conviction that it is going to happen. Sometimes this conviction is freely formed; sometimes it is forced upon us. A resolution is simply a voluntary belief that we are *going* to act in a certain way; and if we can hold to the belief, the action (if a possible one) will come off in the present or foreseen conditions. But here again, illusion and imagination can paralyze us. I know that I *want* to get out of bed, and that I *can* do it, yet perhaps I cannot believe that I *am going* to do it; and for this reason alone I fail. I need therefore to create the unhesitating conviction that I am going to do it at a definite

instant. Here expectancy depends largely on experience. If what we *want* to do, and *can* do, in any matter has been habitually done, with few or no exceptions, then it is easy and natural to believe firmly that it will be done again. But if it has been habitually shirked and deferred; if our resolutions have not been steadily associated with performance; if they have been constantly changed, not through changed conditions, but through flinching from foreseen inconveniences, then the conviction that we want to get up does not carry after it, by a sort of habitual necessity, the conviction that we are *going* to get up; and may even (in cases of will-paralysis) suggest the belief that we are certainly not going to get up. This is the reason why when we postpone a disagreeable duty, such as answering a dull letter, it seems to get every day more and more impossible. It is not that it gets more difficult, but that we get less and less able to convince ourselves that we are going to do it; we get to distrust ourselves, just as we distrust others who break their promises time after time. When others lie to us repeatedly we cannot believe them any more, nor control, nor govern them; so, when by repeatedly breaking our resolutions we have lied to ourself time after time, we cease to have faith in our own promises and to be able to control ourselves. That the resolve and the deed, should, by habit, be inseparably associated is the essential condition of moral strength and self-government. The child who has once learnt that commands can be reversed by persevering entreaties and annoyance is no

longer manageable. And as to associate the ideas of resolve and execution is the condition of self-control; so, to associate the dictate of conscience with resolve, is the condition of moral and virtuous self-control. Still, however this expectancy, hopeful or despairing, may be determined by habit and experience, it has got no rational foundation, and can be resisted by simply recognizing its illusory character and going against it. That I have failed a thousand times (in what I *wanted* to do and *could* have done) is no *reason* why I should fail now, except so far as it makes it difficult for me to imagine myself succeeding, or to expect to succeed. Thus here again purity, and many other virtues, depend chiefly on the control of the imagination by the reasoning faculty.

LXV.

THE JUDGE OF EACH.

This Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted (and thine own soul a sword shall pierce), that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.—Luke ii. 35.

Though there seems a good deal of religious indifferentism abroad, it is impossible to take an indifferent attitude in regard to Christ. "He who is not with Me is against Me; he who is not against Me is for Me." "What think ye of Christ; whose Son is He?" is a question that sooner or later must be faced and answered by every man in the secret of his conscience, and on that answer depends his eternal rising or his eternal fall. As chemical substances are proved and tested by their reactions to

a known acid, so every man is proved and tested, and the hidden thoughts of his heart are revealed when he is fairly confronted with Christ. His attitude must infallibly be one of like or dislike; of love or hatred; enthusiastically for Him, or enthusiastically against Him.

He tells us how at the final judgment the Blessed will be drawn to Him, as to a magnet, like to like; and the wicked driven away from before His face. It is not His spoken word *Come* or *Go* that draws the former or repels the latter, but His whole nature and being, which in the one case delights, and in the other revolts. The same sunlight that gladdens the healthy eye, blinds and tortures the unhealthy; the same fire that warms and quickens, may also consume us.

But even now, He is judging the earth wherever and so far as His name is known; even now He is winnowing the chaff from the grain, He is setting the sheep at His right hand and the goats at His left—*Nunc est judicium hujus mundi*—"Now is the judgment of this world." As in a surging multitudinous assembly, at a given word, each struggles to his place, so since the Gospel word has gone forth to the ends of the earth the whole race of man is astir like a nest of frightened ants, each seeking for what he considers salvation whether *in* Christ or *from* Christ; whether in the world, or from the world. And when this work of shaking and winnowing is finished, when all that impedes and delays the perfect equilibrium of the whole system shall be at an end; when each atom shall no longer stand in

the path of any other, or arrest its destined progress, but all shall fly, by the unassisted force of their natural gravitation, to their eternal posts in the universal system, some to the right and some to the left of the Central Sun, then shall the judgment of the world be accomplished and the thoughts of all hearts be revealed.

But even now judgment is begun wherever, and so far as, His name is known; for wherever, and so far as, the true conception of Christ has been brought home to the heart, that heart must be drawn or repelled, and thereby its secret tendencies and thoughts revealed to itself. The crucifix says *Come* or *Go* to every man who sees it intelligently and otherwise than as the dull eye of a mere animal might see it. It passes judgment on his present state; on what would be, were he now to die, his eternal state.

And what is true of Christ is true proportionally of them that are His. He is the Just One *par excellence*, the Sun of Justice by whose borrowed light they shine, the eternal substance whereof they are the flitting temporal shadows; yet in varying measure every just man of whatever age or clime is by adoption a son of God, a defective Christ, set for the fall or the resurrection of many, for a sign to be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. To His Apostles Christ promises a future share in His judicial office, as the reward of their participation in His humiliation: "You have stood by Me in My trials and shall sit by Me on thrones judging the tribes of Israel;" but even here

and now, this honour belongs to all His Saints—"The Saints shall judge the world." The Hebrew prophets of old prefigured Christ and His passion in the precise measure that they loved righteousness and hated iniquity; and what is written in the book of Wisdom of the Just Man in general might have been copied from the life of Christ. There is not an honest man in the world who is not so far a prophet of God and a Judge of the people.

Hence it is, that the non-Christian who has never known Christ in substance, knows Him in shadow; knows Him in the person of His just ones and His prophets; and is judged, tested, and revealed by his attitude in regard to them, whether it be one of like or dislike, love or hatred. He who shrinks from the moonlight shall he not be tortured by the blaze of the noon-day sun; he who is enamoured of the image, shall he not fall down and worship the reality? As yet judgment is only begun; Christ is as weak in the world, as conscience is in the midst of our raging passions and ambitions. His foes are not yet under His feet; rather it is He who is under the feet of all; despised and rejected of men. The world that one day shall wither away like a burning scroll from the face of His contempt, now leaps upon Him like a wild beast; and all who would live godly in Christ must so far suffer persecution, must be targets for the arrows of slander and calumny, signs to be spoken against as she was who, as she stood closer to Him in His trials than all others, was of all others most keenly pierced with the sword of His Sorrows.

LXVI.

THE JUDGE OF ALL.

From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

The distinction between the general and public judgment of the human race, and the particular and private judgment of each soul after death, seems to have come but gradually to Catholic consciousness, in obedience perhaps to the felt exigencies of the sense of justice. At first, when the day of general retribution was believed to be so imminent that those there standing would behold its dawn with their bodily eyes, no such distinction was suggested. Later, the destiny of the departed, yet awaiting the second advent, must have given rise to a question which was answered by the doctrine of the particular judgment.

Christ Himself has given us a visual picture of that final and public adjustment which is to be the fruit of His own mediation in the Divine plan; and Christian imagination has given an analogous setting, borrowed also from the judicial process of earthly tribunals, to the revelation of each soul to itself in the instant when it passes from the conditions of time and place into those of eternity—when "the body shall return to the dust; and the soul, to God who gave it."

Surely we need not, save in point of degree and intensity, go beyond the known experiences of conscience to get at the reality veiled beneath the popular imagery of the particular judgment. For

there, in that tribunal of the heart, God and self are ever face to face. Let us but see God more clearly, and self more clearly; let but the mists of memory be cleared away, and let all our past in minutest detail be simultaneously brought to life again, and set before our inavertible gaze, in the blinding light of God's spotless holiness, and the soul is already judged in the first flash of everlasting day.

But the soul is not related to God alone; it is related to the whole organism of humanity whereof it is a member. We are not, and ought not to be, indifferent to the judgment of our fellow-men; and the desire we have of their merited esteem and affection is at once a result and a furthering cause of that spiritual oneness of all men, whereof their bodily relationship and likeness is but the defective symbol. We naturally desire the praise, and fear the censure of the just; of those whose judgment is an echo of the divine. If we have been wrongfully accused before men, it is not enough for us to be righted secretly before God; if iniquity is hidden on earth under the cloak of justice, it is not enough for us to know that it is stript bare and revealed before the angels in heaven. That sense of justice which we derive from God, in the measure that we are like Him, will never be satisfied till "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and *all flesh shall see it together*." This sense of justice is indeed our consciousness of that divine and universal Will, which works in us and in all creatures, and makes them converge and co-operate to the perfect realization of that idea, that "glory of the sum of things" to

which all are moving, or being moved, consciously or unconsciously, freely or forcedly;—to that deliverance of expectant creation (God's finite son and image) from the bondage under which it is now groaning and travailling.

The more strongly this divine sense of justice is developed in us, and the more we fret over the inequalities and unfairnesses which God's unfinished work now presents to our onesided view; so much the more do we crave and cry out for that final consummation and perfect vision which will show us everything in its right place and true proportions; which will admit us into the light of that eternal Sabbath-day from which God looks back restfully on His finished labour and sees that all, when taken together, is exceeding good. For this, the just of all ages and nations and religions have cried aloud; of this the prophets have dreamt and sung, lifting up their eyes with Mary, to the hills of dim futurity already touched with the promise of that golden day, when every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; when the crooked ways shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; when the mighty shall be put down and the lowly lifted up; the hungry filled, and the rich emptied; when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

We picture this general judgment as a distinct event which intervenes between the disorder and tumult of time, and the order and quiet of eternity. But the reality which is figured in the picture of the valley of Jehosaphat, the throne of judgment, the

sheep and the goats, is that permanent state of equilibrium to which all things, now rudely shaken together, are settling down in obedience to that law of gravitation by which the creature is drawn back to the bosom of the Creator, whose love breathed it forth that it might return to Him not void, but having fulfilled all whereunto it was sent. Some nearer, some further, some at the right hand, some at the left, they all cluster round that centre and take their appointed places in the system for all eternity.

LXVII.

AFTER DEATH.

None has ever been known to return from the grave. Wisdom ii. 1.

Even the lips of Lazarus were sealed, if indeed he had been permitted an entry into the eternal realities. As for the results of "psychic research" they give us stones for bread. Even what they apparently establish is humiliating in its childishness and witlessness. Aimless freakishness characterizes all the dealings of these disembodied agencies that are supposed to be the liberated spirits of rational beings. Who will believe that a spirit can just rap on a table and find no other way of expression? One thing alone is established—the universal and perpetual yet unsatisfied craving for one word to break the silence between the living and the dead. Yet our impatience with this silence is in some sort as childish and irrational as the resentment we feel at God's silence when, picturing Him manwise, as we must do, we think He is naturally corporeal,

visible, audible, and only hides Himself wilfully by some magical power. When better taught, we understand how it is that He ever speaks and reveals Himself, how He is never silent, never out of our ken for an instant. "Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet." By our ignorant presuppositions and expectations "our eyes were held and we knew Him not," though our hearts burnt within us, while He walked by our side and spoke to our heart and affections—just as we fail to recognize the sun in the warmth of our bodies, or the earth in the weight of our limbs. So, it is because we still fancy the soul in terms of the body—because we picture that which thinks and knows, as itself something thought and known, that we expect it to come to us from some imaginary otherwhere, and speak to us with lips of flesh and warm human breath. We forget that were such manifestation given (by divine permission or power) it would be only an "economy" adapted to our childish thought —a device of "language" in the larger sense. And indeed the usual accordance of such appearances and revelations with the preconceived views and fancies of the recipient, points altogether this way. When we once realize the absurdity of trying to express reality in the terms of appearance, to think of that which thinks, or to know that which knows, we see that there cannot possibly be any real contact of our senses with the realities of the spiritual world; but at best with the bodily symbols of that world. As the world of sound and the world of colour interpenetrate one another, and yet the former is

sealed to one born deaf, the latter to one born blind; so there may be, and doubtless is, penetrating this natural order a spiritual order to which we are deaf and blind.

In this life all language and consequently all communication between spirit and spirit is dependent on material symbolism, and is carried on through our bodies. The disembodiment of either interlocutor makes converse impossible. As the partial decay or disorder of the body, partially shuts the soul off from its proper relation to the physical world, so by death it is shut off altogether. We speak childishly of the soul leaving the body, as though it were a body within the body; we might as well talk of gravitation leaving the body when it falls to pieces. It is rather the body that leaves the soul. All our perplexities about the pre-existence, multiplication, and distinction of souls are rooted in the same fallacy of conceiving it body-wise, and indeed it is our only possible way of conceiving it, namely, by analogy with the natural objects of our knowledge which are the appearances of bodily things. If the falseness of our analogy could be corrected by the falseness of a complementary analogy, it might be said that the human soul is one eternal thing which developes a new centre of consciousness as often as it finds a new organism meet for the exercise of its functions, and providing it with the means of acquiring another sum of experiences which we call a human life. The dead do not return because they do not depart; they are ever with us and in us—"spirit to spirit, and ghost to ghost." We are still

tied to the consciousness of our own experience, past and present; whether death will break down this barrier and let us into the secret of every other human life, opening up to us the records of universal memory, we cannot say. But even the ancient scholastic theory about the converse of pure spirits [v. *De locutione Angelorum apud Thomam Aquinatis*] favoured the conjecture that our bodies are but cell-walls that now sever one hermit-spirit from another; that the dead look us through and through, and our minds are transparent to them, though theirs are opaque to us while we yet walk blindfold in the flesh; and hence though we speak to them passively and in spite of ourselves, they cannot speak to us.

This fusion of souls, this perfect interchange of experience with experience, would be "another world" more "other" than the localized heaven. Nay, it would have in itself the making of a heaven or hell according to the manner of beholding, and the disposition of the beholder—to God it is Heaven, and to Satan it is Hell. He lacks the final link that binds all together and makes order of chaos, light of darkness, Jerusalem of Babylon. These indeed are dreamings and fancies, but so are all our conjectures in these matters; and we might at least try to have fair fancies rather than foul. At all events it is well to see how far our grievance at the silence of the dead may be aggravated by expectations founded on false analogy.

LXVIII.

THE COMMUNION OF SOULS.

If one member suffer anything all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular.—1 Cor. xii. 26.

As a mere hypothesis or pictorial symbolism, the belief that our several souls are not like so many grains of corn, wholly separate and mutually exclusives, but are rather like the distinct and individuated fingers of the same hand, meeting in it and with it forming one thing, may be said to be probable in so far as it binds together more facts, and labours under fewer difficulties than the others. Although in regard to our animal organism the "arboreal" conception of our racial unity, is destroyed by the breaking-off of each new offshoot from the parent stem; and by the decay and death of those intermediary links which bind the present generation to the remote past; yet if generation be but a variety of growth, as physiology is beginning to realize, it may well be that, the subject of all human experience is one and the same thing, diversely terminated in independent centres of consciousness and experience—as it were reaching out new branches, new feelers, in every direction wherein fresh food for its corporate life may be gathered; that it is in some vague sense one nature in many persons, and therein a less inadequate image of the Godhead than we imagine; that there may be some truth, some dim expression of real observation in the old Arabic

speculations as to the oneness of the intellectual principal in all men.

The obvious objection is the apparent pantheistic trend of this hypothesis,—the endangering of personal distinctness. God dwells in us and we in Him without prejudice to personal distinctness. Nowhere is personality so distinct as where mind, will, and operation are absolutely identical, *sc.*, in God; nor does this view imply that, our consciousness of our own distinctness from other centres of consciousness and experience is illusory; or that all selfs are but disturbances and ripples on the face of an ocean of unconsciousness; nor does it even deny the distinctness of my total of direct experience from every other person's total. It only divines that these several peaks of consciousness spring up from and rest upon a common earth; that the direct experience of one, is the indirect experience of all; that all is recorded in those deeper strata of memory which lie below the plane from which the peaks shoot up and which run through and under all. Normally our light is too weak to reach far below the surface, or to show us more than part of the record even of our own personal experience; but could it be strengthened indefinitely it might carry our vision to that buried treasury into which all consciousness present and past have poured their contributions—that Doomsday book *in quo totum continetur; unde mundus judicetur.*[1]

[1] Wherein all has been recorded
Whence man's doom shall be awarded.

And there seem to be moments of supernormal enlightenment, intense flashes of intuitive introspection, when we see recorded in ourselves the thoughts, or the sufferings, or the experiences of another who is distinct from us in place—perhaps, even in time; when a strong cry to which some sympathetic heart is resonant, pierces to the depth and thence reverberates with an echo audible for "those who have ears to hear."

Still clearer is the testimony of the will and the affections—of that most familiar and least considered fact of the sympathetic sentiment of fraternity which makes the joys and sorrows of another to be felt as in some measure our own. What simpler solution can this commonest mystery find than the possible fact that, somewhere, deep down, every other soul is vitally connected with our own,—is more or less remotely a part of ourself; that as the Divine will lives and works in our whole being, and claims supremacy over our own will, so every created will makes itself felt in us and claims to be considered among the motives of our action. Such a conception, though inevitably materialistic like all our conceptions of spirit, is at least free from the grosser materialism that regards the soul as a body within the body, as something which escapes after death,—as it might be a vapour; which passes through space to heaven or hell, and is therefore measurable by reference to space, and corporeal.

Although ever insisting on the immateriality of the spirit, there is not a preacher or theologian

who perforce does not straightway contradict himself the moment he tries to speak about the spirit—for indeed our mind is not equal save to the things of sense.[1]

Furthermore, revelation, in most cases, throws light on nature, and anticipates the slow and uncertain fruits of philosophy; and the revealed idea of the Communion of Saints, of the mystical Body of Christ, of the Blessed Trinity, and the dependent conception of Divine Charity, all seem to presuppose and expand the relationship here suggested between soul and soul; all imply that man's final blessedness and perfection consist in a likeness and union with the Holy Trinity where Three Persons enjoy one and the same life, thought, and love; in the adoption of all created souls into that same unity; in the communizing of all our experience and the breaking down of those cell-walls that now make us mysteries to one another; in the perfect transparency of every mind to every mind, and of every heart to every heart; so that there shall be many eyes but one vision; many tongues but one word; many hearts but one joy.

Also, the development of our conscious and moral being points the same way. To know ourselves through and through, as we really are, is the end of all our prayers; it is another aspect of the knowledge of God and of Reality. Our first

[1] Common-sense philosophy, as it is called, is the philosophy implied in common language; and language being a symbolism addressed to the eye or the ear, is essentially materialistic in its implications.

and barbarous self-knowledge is superficial and unreal. In that stage we are egoistic in the narrow sense. But as we rise in self-knowledge and moral dignity, we gradually realize our true self and recognize that we are but parts of a whole, whose well-being is our own—first, parts of the family; then of the tribe and nation; then of humanity, and lastly of all creation. That is, in the measure that our deepening knowledge passes down from the vertex of the peak to its base—from the intense consciousness of separateness, to the dim consciousness of sameness; from the luminousness of our personal experience, to the twilight and darkness of universal experience, we come to see that the whole lives in us, and that in it we live and move and have our being.

And yet we must not talk too glibly of entering into the heart and mind of others and making their experience our own, as we shall if we picture the subject and its experience in terms of the object; as though it were a sort of invisible substance which, could it be made visible, would betray its modifications and changes to our very eyes. I can know what you know; feel what you feel; but I cannot know your knowing; or feel your feeling; I can more or less reproduce your experience to myself as far as the objective facts are concerned; but the co-factor is "you" in your case and "I" in mine. In reading the biography of another the measure of my own past experience limits the extent to which I can reproduce it to myself. I become his image, and

know him, not directly, but in this image; the form and fashion may be more or less similar, but the central substance is different. Is there not then an illusion or fallacy in the vague wish to read the soul of another made transparent in some way to my intuition—as though memory were a volume in which each recorded his experience to be taken up and re-read at pleasure, and which might conceivably be passed on to another or laid open to his gaze?

Yet if even now, by aid of language we can reveal some part of our inner experience to others or enable them to reproduce an image of it in themselves, and in this way to get inferentially at our thoughts; we can at least conjecture the possibility of some far richer and more subtle vehicle of self-disclosure whereby a like indirect access to the heart-secrets of another might be secured to an indefinitely higher degree. Yet this mere thinning of its partition-walls to transparency hardly answers the craving we have for a direct presentment of the experience of others. We sometimes come very near to feeling the physical wounds of another as though they were inflicted on our own limbs. If, then, sympathy can make the body of another to be as our own, why not the soul as well? And if the soul of one, why not of all?

Certainly this will-union of perfect sympathy and mutual understanding is the closest spiritual union of which we can have any clear and distinct conception; and yet we may and do grope after something higher and still more intimate that

trancends our powers of precise explanation and belongs to the realm of mystery. We feel that God at least must be at the very centre and in the very act of our knowing and willing and feeling; that our experience must in some sense be His also—that in all our afflictions He is afflicted, and in all our gladness He is rejoiced; that whatever is done to the least of His little ones is done to Him, not merely vicariously, but, in some mysterious way, identically; that He is concentric with every centre of life—not as a person (for that perhaps were a contradiction), but as being more than a person; as being the fountain of all personality and distinctness; in whom all persons live and move and are; against whose intimate permeation no barrier can avail. Shall He build a house into which He cannot enter? In Him at least, our ultimate loneliness is broken down; if in spite of fullest sympathy of thought and love we remain for ever secrets to one another, in His heart all these secrets are treasured and put together. There, is the root whence all personalities branch out with a separateness that increases with every moment of their several lives. Perchance when we shall know ourselves down to the root we shall find that our union in Him is far more real, than our separateness outside Him. "I in them," says Christ, "and Thou in Me, that they may be perfect in one."

LXIX.

PURGATION BY LOVE.

If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.—
2 Tim. ii. 12.

Christ passed through His passion to His glory that He might go before us who have, in the very nature of things, to pass to the Father by the same road. "I am the Way: . . . no man cometh to the Father but by Me. . . . If any man will come after Me let him take up his cross and follow Me." But the inward and most fiery suffering of Christ's passion was not what He suffered directly in what befell Him personally; but what He tasted of the ocean of all human suffering by divine fulness of insight and divine depth of compassion—the whole detailed record, past, present, and future, being unrolled before His gaze while He hung on His Cross.

And this is the fire that of all others is to purify our souls,—the fire of grief and anguish for the sins, the ignorance, the sorrows and afflictions of those whom we love; not a self-centred sorrow for our troubles, temporal and spiritual; but an unselfish, love-born sorrow. Just in the measure that here on earth we wake to a sense of our true self, and recognize our solidarity with others as fellow-branches of one Mystical Vine rooted in the very heart of Christ and fed with His life-blood; do we begin to purge ourselves by this sharing in the unselfish passion of Christ. To love is neces-

sarily to suffer; to love better and more widely, is to suffer more and more; that is, however, as long as our growing knowledge is still incomplete and multiplies more problems and perplexities than it solves; and before we come to share the divine comprehension of the Sum of Things,—of the final results when death shall be swallowed up in victory, and good shall be the final goal of ill, and God shall, with that vision, wipe away all tears from our eyes.

As it is the last word of a clause or sentence which gives meaning to all before, or even alters its apparent meaning to something quite opposite, so it is just the lack of perhaps one explanatory addition that makes the most perfect unity a mere chaos up to the last moment of its completion. That unknown deed by which God shall save His word in all things and yet make all well that is not well, is included in that absolute view which things eternally present to His untroubled gaze. *Viditque Deus cuncta quæ creavit et ecce bona erant valde*—God viewed the collective result of the labour, and lo! it was exceeding good; and God entered into His rest. But for the finite mind this total view must be built up laboriously piece by piece; and indeed as it grows, the sense of chaos, of inequality, of wickedness victorious over goodness, often becomes more painful, and the impenetrable mystery of evil gets darker and darker and more overwhelming as its data are more widely and deeply comprehended, until hope is well-nigh extinct and the soul cries from its cross: "My God, my God,

why hast Thou forsaken me? Carest Thou not that we perish?"

It would seem to be almost demanded of the nature of our soul and of its eternal life, that no one should pass to the Father, should enter into that full vision of the glory of "all things taken together" which constitutes the joy of their Lord, without enduring, according to the fullest measure of their capacity, that fiery trial through which the human soul of Christ freely chose to pass for our encouragement and redemption. Hence if not here, at least hereafter, the whole history of man's sorrow must gradually be unfolded to our gaze from the first to that last syllable of that recorded time which is suddenly to turn it all into joy, and give meaning to its incoherence.

> . . . There no shade can last
> In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
> But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
> The eternal landscape of the past.

This is the true purgatorial fire, the agony of unselfish love. When the cell-walls that now shut us up in solitude, save for what leaks into us of the lives of others through the chinks and crannies of our senses, shall have resolved themselves into mist and nothingness; when the mysterious oneness of all souls in God, closer than the closest brotherhood, shall break upon our astonished understanding and give birth to a passionate love corresponding to our expanded vision; then surely the gradual mastering of the many-chaptered tale of the sorrows and sins of those newly endeared multitudes must be no less

than a drop-by-drop draining of the chalice of Christ's own passion. We need not idly conjecture if this purgatorial process be temporal or instantaneous, since in either case it has to be gone through with; the total idea must be built up of its several parts and stages; the blessed end cannot be reached without the bitter means; none can comprehend the glory who has not tasted the shame; or enjoy the rest who has not been through the labour; or find peace in the answer who has not comprehended the full magnitude of the difficulty.

LXX.

HEAVEN AS CONCEIVABLE.

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, not hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.—1 Cor. ii. 9.

How effectual a motive the hope of Heaven would be, were it less transcendently and unimaginably glorious! Who would not keep faithful to the narrow, up-hill path, were he certain it would lead him just to such a life of converse with the blessed dead as endeared them to him here on earth. But even they, according to the common conception of the matter, will be so denaturalized, so raised above all their endearing human weakness, so wrested from the only surroundings in which their life, as we knew them, could have play, that our reunion seems in prospect a rather more dubious joy than that which we anticipate at meeting, after fifty years of silent absence, some sister or brother, known to us only as the companion of our babyhood. What

we really crave for is "the old familiar faces" and the old familiar ways; and to secure these we could well dispense with radiancy, agility, subtlety, and all the other perplexing anomalies of the glorified body and soul.

Hell is, as a rule, a more animating motive than Heaven, partly of course because pain is more stimulating than pleasure; but partly also because it is popularly set before us in terms so much more imaginable and concrete. A sensuous Heaven were unworthy of a spiritual religion, but a sensuous Hell is not so obviously inconsistent.

But can this pure-minded craving to have back the old days remain unsatisfied if Heaven is to be really a Heaven for the human heart? If memory, even with its present imperfection, sets us back more us less really in the past; if it reunites us for a moment with our dead self of long ago, and with other selves now changed or altogether gone; if what once *has been* for consciousness, acquires through memory a certain immutable eternity, may it not be so in a higher and better way for memory perfected hereafter? Shall not the haze of distance that separates us from the old days be dispelled by this sense of eternity, and swallowed up in one co-present experience of all that we have lived through? If time be the creature of our mind, then it is only in respect to our limited knowledge that the past is non-existent; while a better eye could perhaps pierce through time, as well as through space, and bring everything to *here* and *now*.

LXXI.

THE UNDYING PAST.

The angel . lifted up his hand to Heaven and swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever that time should be no longer.—Rev. x. 5, 6.

To seize each "now" and make the very best of it, is, in some sense, the secret of a successful life; for past and future are imaginary, whereas the "now" is real. Yet on closer inspection this "now" dwindles into a metaphysical abstraction, a mere point between past and future—between our memories and our expectations; and what we really live on is retrospect and prospect, more or less remote; the "present" being but the more immediate past and future.

A satisfactory retrospect should therefore be our chief care for many reasons. First because our memories to a large extent determine our expectations: our prospect takes colour from our retrospect; the successful are more likely to be hopeful—and of hopes and fears as to the future, of regrets and pleasures as to the past, our will-life is built up. But while the future into which we strain our eyes is furnished by the shadowy creatures of imagination, our past is made up of fact and reality, and its taste, sweet or bitter, is forced upon us, and is not now of our determining. The ghosts we raise we can also lay; we can banish vain fears and hopes for a future that may never be; but what we have written, we have written for ever in the record of the past, and only by wilful self-blinding

and at the sacrifice of some integral part of our inner life can we shut the gates of memory. How will this action look in retrospect, when fitted into the mosaic of memory? a restful support, or a haunting horror?—that is the question that should chiefly guide our conduct.

This past, moreover, enters into and determines every present; it is the framework, the shape or mould into which each fresh experience is received. As each individual borrows the language, the mind, the beliefs, the tastes of the society into which he is born; as his originality, even were it the greatest, is but one-tenth, and his unoriginality nine-tenths of his character; so each new experience that is born into our consciousness is chiefly determined by the multitudes that have preceded it; the action from without is overwhelmed by the reaction from within. . . . *Qualis quisque est talis ei finis videtur*—As a man is, so seem things good or evil to him.

Yet why is it that, when we can freely excite pleasing emotions by mere day-dreaming, by castle-building, by the fictitious experience of the imagination, we need care, and do care so much for the *reality*, the "factual" character, of our past? Undoubtedly such mere dreamings effectively determine our character according as they feed or strengthen certain emotions and appetites, or starve and paralyze others. On this fact the importance of high standards in fine art is based—the educational value of music, poetry, fiction, and even history—the wisdom of the Christian religion which tells us that apart from the effectual desires and

emotions to which they gave birth, our thoughts have a moralizing or demoralizing effect, and must be guarded and purified.

Is it, then, merely in point of intensity that the remembrance of the past that has been, differs, in educational value, from the dream of a past that might have been? I wake in the morning following some calamity: "It was a dream, . . . but no, it was a reality." What an irreducible difference of mental and emotional attitude these two affirmations excite! Indeed, is it not wonderful how we face sleep, night after night, knowing the terrible experiences we may have to pass through in our dreams—so absolutely real for us at the time—simply because their unreality is recognized before and after? Obviously, facts and realities entail after consequences; they change the current of our subsequent experience in a way that dreams and fancies cannot; they affect that part of our life that is determined from outside, and independently of our free action and inward response. But often such consequences are not present to our consciousness, and yet the same obstinate difference between the value of facts and fancies remains. I can blush now for some *gaucherie*, some *faux pas* of twenty years ago, witnessed by no one now alive, stripped of every conceivable present consequence. I should like to think it a dream. Yet why? Furthermore, the present consequences of our remote past are so utterly incalculable,—evil is so largely fruitful of unforeseen good; and good, of unforeseen evil,—that this consideration of conse-

quences has little to do with our frequent wish that the past had been otherwise.

It seems then that we are driven back to the ultimate and irreducible truth, that fact and reality is the object of our spiritual will, by which it is determined and which, in turn, it strives to determine and bring into conformity with itself. Doubtless, fancies too are facts, but until they are realized and linked into the chain of external phenomena they are subject to our will—our slaves and not our masters—they do not determine that world which determines us and curtails our liberty. Fancy is but the suggestion of a fact that might be, but is not; might have been, but was not.

The past that no longer exists for our senses, exists for our will, and exists for ever, except so far as failing memory may curtain it off from our regard. It exists for our will, because it acts upon us with an action that either jars or soothes, as it is discordant or accordant with what we now wish the past to have been—an action as real and present as that of the light that beats upon our eyes, or of the sound-waves that break upon our ears. Not merely in memory, not merely in the present to which it has given posthumous birth, is the past still alive. These are the symbols—the reverberating echoes—by which it speaks to us; but in itself, what has once been, is, and shall be—*Quod scripsi, scripsi.*

For the notion of "presence," which is borrowed from the order of sense, is inseparable from that of action. So long as, and just in the measure that,

an object acts on the several senses it is said to be present to them, however distant in other respects. The star long since extinct may be still present to vision—no image, but the star itself, unless we are to say that all we see is but the image of what we see. Present to hearing may be absent from sight or from contact. Absent from sense may be present to memory; and is not this presence as "real" as the other in its own order?

We give however a greater reality to what we can touch, to what resists us; because it is the resistance offered to our will that first makes us aware of our own reality, and of other realities that seem to have a contrary will. What wills and acts; what determines sensations and appearances and memories, is for us, the real *par excellence*. It is therefore the unalterable, will-resisting character of facts that distinguishes them from fancies which we can mould at pleasure. It is because the past for ever acts upon our will by resisting it, that, for us, it is ever real and present. The indelible character therefore of the past, its joys and sorrows, its light and darkness, can never be to us a matter of indifference as are the dreams, however fraught with thrilling interest, at which we smile on waking.

Just now our memory is too dull and weak to permit the immeasurable past to oppose its full force to our will. A fast-fading and feebly-coloured fragment of our own personal history, and some shreds and tatters of the page of universal history from which it has been torn off, is as much as we can now conveniently deal with. But where memory

is perfect in any particular, it so far puts us in touch with the reality of the past once more; for the object is always there, it is only our faculty that fails us. If the remote past is not a reality, neither is the immediate past; yet all our real perceptions are of the immediate past, since the present is but a mathematical abstraction. As we can see through space what is not immediately present to the eye; so we have in memory, a faculty that looks back through time,—whose object, like that of the eye, is no self-constructed, pliable image, but the bygone reality or fact which faces us like a solid adamantine rock—which our wills cannot alter,—and that is what we mean by reality.

Hence the vast importance of ever thinking how our actions will strike us in the "House not made with hands;" when "clear from marge to marge shall bloom the eternal landscape of the past;" when in virtue of perfect vision and memory the dead shall rise again, and time shall be no more, and every detail of the past shall live again for us, and the intervening mist (projected now from the tired eyes of memory) shall be cleared away.

Presso e lontano li né pon né leva—
There *Near* and *Far* nor help nor hinder sight,

and the sound of every word we have spoken in the past shall ring in our ears for ever.

But surely there is more bitterness than sweetness in this thought. If there is an insatiable hankering to have the old days back again that it will satisfy, is there not a past we should gladly,

were it possible, think to be but a dream; whose obstinate reality is a torture to us; against which we interpose the thickest curtains of voluntary oblivion. Can present joy and glory, or even final and eternal joy, make the reality of past suffering or shame indifferent to us, especially if the past shall live again, and shall move us with all the efficacy of the present? Shall the river of Time's gathered tears pour its cataracts into the bosom of Heaven's calm crystal sea? Shall the groans and sighs and shrieks of all the ages, whose travail was the price of present fruition, mingle harmoniously with "the shout of them that triumph, the song of them that feast"?

Cold and cruel is the philosophy that bids us rest in the thought of some future age on earth when, by slow evolution, the interests of duty and pleasure shall have become coincident. Even could we who have heard and believed this new gospel, now find solace for our pains in the prospective joys of that remote and problematic futurity (whose permanence and stability is not even suggested); even could we see therein some objective compensation for the degradation, the savagery, the ape-and-tiger animalism through which the race had necessarily to pass in struggling upwards from the mire; what of the countless millions of sufferers who never dreamt, who could not dream of, or care for, such a compensation? Shall it be the aim of that perfect and triumphant humanity to co-operate with the feebleness of its memory, with the faultiness of its blood-stained record, and so to wall itself off from

the disagreeable realities of the past, like a man who by some fraud has stept to a sudden fortune and would gladly forget what refuses to be forgotten; or as some of our money-princes who have trodden their wealth out of the millions, as wine is trodden out of grapes?

Our sense of justice and wisdom and love is exigent of far more than such a philosophy offers us. It will at least dream, and hold fast to its dream, of a final restitution of all things; it will see the dead both small and great; poor and rich; ignorant and enlightened; degraded and cultured; ancient and modern; the first and the last; those who have laboured, and those who have entered into their labours—standing before the throne of triumphant justice; it will see all who, even unconsciously and unwillingly (like the blessed Innocents and their sorrowing mothers), have suffered in the working-out of God's plan, entering according to their several capacities into the common joy of their Lord; it will see them rewarded not only according to their personal merits, but according to another, and, by them unexpected, scale of compensation; it will see the illusion of "pastness" swept away like a blinding mist, and the reality and eternal worth of each single syllable of recorded time revealed; it will see how the very pain and shame and sorrow that so much of it reawakens, are active and necessary ingredients of that inconceivable bliss which is the total resultant; it will see that, as the sense of tragedy demands a present remembrance of former happiness; so the tribulations, sins and sorrows of

the Saints are turned into joy, not because they are forgotten, but because they are remembered; or rather, not because they are eternally past, but because they are eternally present as elements in the harmonious chord, the great and final Amen.

If the bliss promised us by our religion is really to meet and quiet the ineradicable longings of our heart, it may be other than this, or more than this, but it cannot be less. Why is it that what is distant from us in time or in space is shrouded in a haze of sadness and unaccountable regret? that I yearn towards some distant hill on the horizon, knowing well that, once there, it would please me no more than that on which I now stand, and which I should then regard with the same dissatisfied wistfulness? Why do I hunger for "the days that are no more," even when I know they were brief and full of misery, more perhaps than the days that are now? Whence that craving,—which is the devotion of the pantheist,—to be at one with all nature, and to enter into and share her immensity, her eternity, differing though they do but in degree from our own extent and duration? Whence all this, if not from the conflict between our will and our ability? We would be at once everywhere and everywhen; we would enter into the divine life and experience, immense and eternal, and be freed from the limits of time and space in which now our soul is caged liked a fluttering and broken-hearted bird. All our finite gains are at the cost of infinite sacrifice. Before we choose, a thousand courses are open to us, all of which we

desire under some aspect. When we have chosen, the joy of our choice is swallowed up in the accumulated regrets for the alternatives laid aside and put out of our reach for ever. If I choose to be here, I must sacrifice the wish to be in a thousand other places at the same time. If I adopt one study, or pursuit, or state of life, I must resign every other. The gifts that I can use are but a fraction of those that I must therefore bury. In fine, man must either seek the coward's narcotic of contentment, or suffer continually from the sense of capacities unrealized and, under present conditions, unrealizable. If then in Heaven "there shall be no more pain," it must be because the former things which in some sense shall have passed away, shall in a deeper sense abide for ever when "time shall be no more."

LXXII.

THE DEAD.

All these died according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off and saluting them. . . . God having provided some better thing for us that they should not be perfected without us.—Heb. xi. 13, 40.

The neglect of prayer for the dead, and a general lack of interest in the vast buried body of humanity, whereof we who now live are only the newly-forming but as yet unformed matter, is characteristic of the ultra-individualism of modern religion. Of course, if the dead are really dead, and have not merely entered into fuller life; if they live, as other transient causes live, only in their surviving effects; if there is no immortality

save that of fame and if the *mortui ex corde*, the forgotten dead, are as though they had never been; if our relation to them is simply that of one grain-crop to the previous crops from whose seed it has sprung, and not rather that of each year's growth to the spreading vine; then our debt in their regard is mainly one of sentiment, since our creditors are but vague shadows in our memory.

If however the organic conception of humanity be true, and not merely metaphorical; if the dead exist, really, fully, perfectly; and we, only seemingly, partially, and imperfectly; if we are but the year's shoots sent forth into this upper air, to glean from the sunshine a new and abiding increment of life and vigour for the whole organism, to be centres of fresh experience, and to bring back store of new food for the secret general life of wonder and joy; if the past is rather the invisible present, out of which the visible present grows,—upon which it depends; then the Catholic instinct which prays for, worships, and has recourse to the blessed dead is more conformable with reality; then indeed the living are but strangers and pilgrims on this visible earth, seeking an invisible city whose builder and maker is God, whose foundations are upon the hills of eternity. In this view, Humanity is one great tree of life which, year by year, sends forth its green, tender shoots to be hardened into formed wood as autumn and winter succeed to summer and spring.

Who can tolerate the thin, shadowy immortality promised to us by positivism? If each life has not

an eternal and abiding effect on every other, apart from the modifications it may have produced in the temporal course of this visible world, how slight its significance! how lost to humanity all that is best in the best lives—those interior thoughts, struggles, and aspirations—those solitary hours of inward activity—which found no expression, or no adequate expression in word or outward deed! Is it not plain that the lives most influential for good in this world need not be the best lives; that the great bulk of moral and spiritual goodness, is, as far as others are concerned, so much waste energy through lack of the occasion and opportunity which now and then favour the mediocre and render their rarer and poorer goodness beneficial to others? Hence to the Positivist, the hermit is a social suicide. But then, how is it that the fate he inflicts upon himself befalls the majority of good men, or at least the greater part of their goodness, in the very inevitable nature of things? How far more accordant to the deeper needs of the heart is the Christian belief that, each life, in all its detail, will be set for ever in the eyes of all, as a theme of wonder and joy; that its chiefest utility in relation to others is not what it seems now, but what it will seem for all eternity!

Or who can rest in the Evolutionist's dream of a coming golden age wherein an unthinkably distant posterity shall enter into the fruit of the miseries of those forgotten generations that have preceded them from the beginning? If the finite nature of things requires that light should grow

out of darkness; strength out of weakness; good out of evil; civilization out of savagery; truth out of error; if others had to be poor that we might be rich, if they had to sow in tears that we might reap in joy, is it like that Loving Justice, which is the root and the fruit of all, to shut out from their share in the general glory, those whose humiliation and shame were its necessary conditions? Dimly and from afar they beheld the promises and hailed them, as the frost-bound earth thrills with some vague anticipation of the spring; but they received not those promises, God having provided some better thing that they *without us* should not be made perfect.

Not till the whole framework of humanity is complete, shall the common joy, shared in due and different measure by the lowliest and meanest, as well as by the highest and most honoured of its members, be made perfect. Then only shall the meaning of the least particle and letter of that utterance be fully revealed, when the last syllable shall have been added to give sense and coherence to all that went before.

This organic conception of the Church holds the yet unguessed answer to many a dark mystery. Those in the Church who are last and least in point of grace and light, have their function in the general harmony and may under a certain aspect be more serviceable, useful, and necessary than the Saints themselves. Considered apart and abstractly they are "common and unclean;" but taken in the concrete, as part of the total unity, they are cleansed

by a certain extrinsic sanctification. Their personal and separate reward and joy is little or nothing; but that joy of the whole, which as parts they share, "no man taketh from them." Even the condemned felon in his cell cannot but thrill with the victory won by his country over her foes. As the Holy Innocents were crowned for sufferings not willingly endured but entailed on them by the working out of God's plans; so no suffering or humiliation involved in the unfolding of Heaven's designs shall pass unrecompensed. For God's "creature" is a collective unit whose final glory and joy shall be reflected back over all to the very beginning. So too in the growth of the human race those countless generations who have passed through darkness and degradation that we might rise to light and grace; the earth-buried root, the unsightly stem, the shapeless branches, no less than the fragant flower and golden fruit shall enter into the collective joy of the Whole, however trivial or negative their personal contribution to that total effect. Unwittingly, like the Holy Innocents, yet none the less really, they have served and ministered to God's glory, and we without them should not have been made perfect.

LXXIII.

OUR DUMB BRETHREN.

Not one of them is forgotten before God.—Luke xii. 6.

As Christians have often made Christianity ridiculous and contemptible, so zoophilists have made zoophily a mere fanaticism of sentimentality. But

surely there is not only a sound rational basis but even a revealed basis for a tender regard for our dumb fellow-mortals. "Your Heavenly Father hath care for them;" means that they are each the object of that same particular and minute providence which numbers the very hairs of our head. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows" does not mean that these are of no value, but asserts a rational scale of valuation, a recognition of patent inequalities. Community of nature is what gives every man *as man*, certain common rights, over and above which some have special rights according to their individual differences and relationships. But with every sort of creature we enjoy some degree of community of nature—higher with higher animals; lower with the lower; and it matters little practically whether we say that they have rights and we duties to them; or that, God holds their rights for them, as parents do for minors, and that we have duties to Him in their regard. In either case the golden rule: "Do as you would be done by" must, with the usual limitations, govern our action in regard to them. Nor need we trouble about their psychology and their power of reflex suffering. It is by their sufferings as we imagine them (*i.e.*, more or less "humanwise") that nature requires us to shape our conduct. A delicate consideration in this matter is the invariable property of a more cultivated gentleness of character; and is a point of more perfect Christliness. Indeed, it is only an expansion of that growing consciousness of our unity with the whole organism of God's creation,

Our most superficial consciousness is of isolated selfishness; then of this self as merged in the isolated family; then of the merging of the family, tribe, nation into the unity of human brotherhood; finally, we take the sentient creation, the whole world of life, nay, inanimate nature herself, into the circle of our widening affection, and recognize the arms of our Father in Heaven clasped round the whole body and bulk of His creation:—the child of His love. "Your Heavenly Father hath care of them," and in the measure that we have care for them our mind and affections are more attuned to His: "He prayeth best who loveth best all things both great and small." That they have to perish in our interest, to die and suffer that we may live and enjoy, is part of the general economy, so perplexing to faith and yet not quite so bewildering to love, by which God even in Nature gives Himself in sacrifice for the life of His creatures; and teaches us that dying for others may be a greater end than living for ourselves. That, like the Innocents, they are involuntary victims to the general welfare; that, in a sense, it is the Heavenly Father who careth for them with a deeper pity than He has given to any of us—it is He who gives them over to pain and death for others; that it is He Himself who, in them, dies daily for us—all this, far from lessening, should increase our consideration for them, and should make us extend to them the sort of reverence accorded to the garlanded victims of a religious sacrifice. If moreover we hold the Aristotelian psychology with its harsh division of perishable

and imperishable "forms," which dooms each spark of non-rational life to speedy and final extinction, we ought in some sense to be even more merciful to the more helpless and less gifted of our fellow-creatures —more careful not heedlessly to shorten or embitter an existence so short at the best. If however we can trust, whether faintly or firmly to the larger hope

> That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroyed
> Or cast as rubbish in the void
> When God has made the whole complete;

that no centre of experience, however humble, once formed, is ever obliterated; then we hold a view which is fanciful if you will; certainly, incorrect and inadequate, yet which is so much as it is more kindly and liberal than the other, is so far nearer the truth.

THE END.

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